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7 dead, 15,000 relocated in Gujarat amid heavy rains

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Bagan come back to pip Bengaluru FC, book spot in final

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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WB student rally meets cops' brute force

Nabanna march sees lathicharge, water cannons & tear gas; Over 200 people arrested

Police use tear gas shells, water cannon to disperse students and other protesters during the 'Nabanna Abhijan' rally called by Paschim Banga Chhatra Samaj, a students' organisation, to protest against the rape and murder of a trainee doctor, in Kolkata, on Tuesday **PHOTOS: PTI**

KOLKATA, 27 AUG

Large-scale violence on the streets of Kolkata and adjacent Howrah marred the cries for justice for the RG Kar hospital victim on Tuesday after protesters, aiming to reach the West Bengal secretariat, Nabanna, fought pitched battles with the police at multiple stoppage points.

The violence, which lasted for nearly four hours, led to several injuries on both sides with senior police officers and women protesters among those who were hurt.

More than 200 people were arrested. Protesters took to stone and glass bottles pelting on the police. Fifteen Kolkata cops and 14 from the state police force were injured.

Police resorted to large-scale lathicharge, unleashed water cannons and lobbed tear gas shells to disperse the crowd who poured in from multiple converging points at Nabanna.

BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari alleged that over 160 protesters, including 17 women, suffered injuries.

- The violence, which lasted for nearly four hours, led to several injuries on both sides with senior police officers and women protesters among those who were hurt

Condemning the police action on protesters, President of BJP's Bengal unit Sukanta Majumdar called a 12-hour Bangla bandh on Wednesday.

State's Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari urged Governor CV Ananda Bose to "impose President's Rule" in the state.

The 'Nabanna Abhijan' call was given by an unregistered student body 'Paschim Banga Chhatra Samaj' and a dissident state government employees' platform 'Sangrami Joutha Mancha' who demanded the resignation of Mamata over rape-murder of a medic at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. West Bengal urged people not to respond to BJP's 6am–6pm general strike.

Shortly afterwards, the state issued a notification stating that all government offices would remain open and all employees, except those facing exigencies or are on leave, would have to report for duty on 28 August or face show-cause for their unauthorised absence. ADG (South Bengal) Supratim Sarkar confirmed that 25 people were arrested from across the State on Monday prior to rally.

"We have proof that these miscreants were planning to use firearms and bombs. The situation could have turned much worse if these arrests were not made," Sarkar said.

According to police, 126 members and supporters of Paschim Banga Chhatra Samaj were arrested on Tuesday. Later in the day, police again used teargas and resorted to lathicharge to disperse BJP leaders and supporters when they marched towards Kolkata Police headquarters at Lalbazar demanding the release of students arrested. —*PTI*

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Nursing student 'raped' by auto driver in M'rashtra

MUMBAI, 27 AUG

A 19-year-old woman nursing course student was allegedly raped by an unidentified auto-rickshaw driver in a forested area in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra, police said on Tuesday. Police have set up a Special Investigation Team consisting of an inspector and ten officials, a day after the alleged incident which occurred when the victim was returning to Ratnagiri city from Devrukh town in the morning hours, an official said. However, police found discrepancies in the victim's statement. Initially, she stated that the accused had laced her drinking water with some sedatives. Later, she changed her statement saying the driver used a spray to make her unconscious, the official said. The woman stated when she regained consciousness, she found herself lying in a forest near Champak Maidan on the outskirts of Ratnagiri city. Her personal belongings were lying scattered at the spot, the official said. Based on the complaint, a case of rape has been registered against the unidentified autorickshaw driver at Ratnagiri city police station, he said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Namibian male cheetah dies at Kuno National Park

SHEOPUR, 27 AUG

Namibian cheetah, Pawan, died in the wild at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, an official said. The latest cheetah fatality at KNP was reported weeks after a five-month-old cub of African cheetah, Gamini, died on 5 August. The male cheetah, Pawan, was found lying near the edge of a swollen nullah amidst bushes without any movement at around 10.30 am on Tuesday, as per a statement issued by the office of the Additional Principal Chief Conservation of Forest (APCCF) and Director of Lion Project, With the death of Pawan, KNP is left with 24 cheetahs, including 12 adults and as many cubs. —*PTI*

25 terrorists neutralised, 11 injured in Pak ops

PESHAWAR, 27 AUG

Twenty-five terrorists, including a top militant commander, were neutralised while eleven others injured after Pakistan's security forces conducted "extensive" intelligence-based operations in the restive Khyber tribal district against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and two of its affiliate groups, the army said Tuesday. The operations were based on "robust intelligence" and resulted in major setbacks to Fitna al Khawarij and its affiliates, the Pakistan military's media wing - the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) - said in a statement, referring to the TTP. During the operations, four soldiers were also killed, it added. Earlier this month, the government declared TTP as 'Fitna al-Khawarij and all other terrorists associated with the group as khariji, a reference to a group in earlier Islamic history involved in violence. —*PTI*

Kavitha walks out of jail after 5 months

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

In a relief to BRS leader K Kavitha, the Supreme Court on Tuesday granted her bail in corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, while questioning the central agencies over the fairness of their probe and asking if they were free to "pick and choose" an accused.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and KV Viswanathan noted since 493 witnesses were to be examined and 50,000 pages of documents were to be considered in the two cases, there was no likelihood of the trial being concluded in the near future.

K Kavitha **PHOTO: PTI**

"The appellant (Kavitha) is directed to be released forthwith on bail ... on furnishing bail bonds in the sum of Rs 10 lakh in each of the cases," the bench said, while allowing her appeals against 1 July verdict of Delhi High Court which had denied her bail in the two cases. The two federal agencies came in for some sharp criticism over the "fairness" of their investigation, with the apex court observing "Sorry to see this state of affairs".

"The prosecution has to be fair. You can't pick and choose anyone. What is this fairness? A person who incriminates himself has been made a witness," the bench said, adding, "Tomorrow you will pick up anyone as you choose and leave anyone as you choose as an accused? Very fair and reasonable discretion!" —*PTI*

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Mohanlal quits as AMMA President

KOCHI, 27 AUG

Top actor Mohanlal and other office-bearers of an influential cine artists' association in Kerala resigned enmasse on Tuesday amidst an uproar over the sexual abuse allegations made against a number of male professionals by women actors over the past few days.

Many women actors, including a Bengali actress, have gone public with allegations of sexual harassment against some of the well-known faces of Malayalam cinema, including eminent director Ranjith and actors Siddique and Mukesh, in the wake of the Justice K Hema Committee report that shed light on workplace harassment in the Malayalam film world.

Mohanlal **PHOTO: PTI**

KERALA'S ME TOO

On Tuesday, the influential actors' union -- Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) issued a press statement announcing the mass resignation of its office-bearers, including president Mohanlal.

AMMA said that the current administrative panel has resigned as such, taking moral responsibility for the allegations. "We are hopeful that AMMA will get a new leadership capable of reforming and strengthening the association. —*PTI*

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16 MOVED TO OTHER JAILS

Darshan shifted to Ballari Jail over VIP treatement

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

After a picture gone viral on social media where the sandalwood actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and others were seen hanging out including a rowdy-sheeter, on the lawns of the jail is being transferred to Ballari jail. He was in judicial custody at Parappana Agrahara Central jail in the Renukaswamy murder case.

The court also permitted the shifting of other co-accused in the murder case to various prisons in the state. Earlier in the day, both Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Home Minister G Parameshwara indicated that authorities were weighing the option of shifting Darshan.

In the picture, the actor is seen in a relaxed mood, sitting on a chair and holding a cigarette and a coffee mug. Also, a purported video of Darshan speaking to a person over a video call from the prison too had surfaced on social media.

Darshan **PHOTO: ANI**

While Darshan will be shifted to Ballari prison, Pawan, Raghavendra, and Nandish will be shifted to Mysuru Jail, Jagadish and Lakshmana to Shivamogga Jail, Dhanraj to Dharwad Jail, Vinay to Vijayapura Jail, Nagaraj to Kalaburagi/Gulbarga Jail, and Pradosh to Belagavi Jail, official sources said. Three accused -- Pavithra Gowda, Anukumar, and Deepak -- will continue to remain at Parappana Agrahara Central Jail. Four other accused -- Ravi, Karthik, Nikhil and Keshavamurthy -- were earlier shifted to Tumakuru prison."There are certain norms , based on which authorities will decide." —*PTI*

MODI TO ATTEND BRICS SUMMIT 2024 IN RUSSIA

MOSCOW, 27 AUG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has confirmed to Russian President Vladimir Putin his readiness to attend the BRICS Summit to be held in Kazan from 22-24 October, which will be the first summit of the grouping after its expansion.

During a telephonic conversation, the two leaders also discussed implementation of trade agreements reached during the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow in July, state-owned Tass news agency reported, citing the press service of the Kremlin.

Putin and Modi agreed on continuing contacts bilateral communication at various levels. "The issues of practical implementation of agreements in the trade and economic area reached during the official visit of the Indian prime minister to Russia in July were discussed," the report said. Russia, which is the current chair of BRICS, will host the summit in Kazan.

On 1 January, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates joined BRICS, making it a 10-member bloc. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are founding members. —*PTI*

TO BEGIN TODAY

India eyes record haul at Paris Paralympics

PARIS, 27 AUG

Battered by life but not beaten by its many challenges, an 84-strong contingent of Indian para-athletes, the largest ever in the country's history and a heady mix of youth and experience, would be eyeing an unparalleled gold rush when the Paralympic Games begin here on Wednesday.

India won a record 19 medals, including five gold, in the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021 for a 24th-place finish in the overall rankings. Three years on, the country's target is more than 25 medals with a double-digit haul in gold.

What has fuelled this ambition is the size of the contingent and the exceptional performances in the past one year.

The 54-member team will compete in 12 sports this year **PHOTO: PTI**

India won a record 111 medals, including 29 gold, at the Hangzhou Asian Para Games last year.

This was followed by unprecedented success at the World Para Athletics Championships in May where the country snared 17 medals, including half a dozen gold for a sixth-place finish in overall.

Several medal winners in Hangzhou are in this Paralympics team, including top stars like world record-holding javelin thrower Sumit Antil (F64) and rifle shooter Avani Lekhara (10m Air Rifle Standing SH1). Both of them would be defending gold medals won in Tokyo.

India is competing in 12 sports this time, as against nine by a 54-member team in Tokyo. The Paralympic Games are set to open Wednesday as some 4,400 athletes with disabilities, permanent injuries or impairments prepare to compete for 549 medals across 22 sports over 11 days in Paris.

The French capital, which just hosted the Olympics, again provides the backdrop for what promises to be another spectacle. —*PTI*

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At 35, Jay Shah becomes ICC's youngest Chairman

DUBAI, 27 AUG

BCCI secretary Jay Shah will take over as the next ICC chairman on December 1 after being elected unopposed for the top post here on Tuesday, making him the fifth Indian to reach the pinnacle of global cricket administration.

The 35-year-old Shah, who has been the BCCI secretary since 2019, will take over from 62-year-old incumbent Greg Barclay after the New Zealander decided against running for a third consecutive term of two years.

Shah, who is the son of union home minister Amit Shah, will relinquish his position in India at the BCCI's Annual General Meeting likely to be held towards the end of next month or in October.

Jay Shah **PHOTO: PTI**

Shah became the youngest Indian among late Jagmohan Dalmiya, Sharad Pawar, N Srinivasan and Shashank Manohar to take over high-profile job.

"I am committed to working closely with the ICC team and our member nations to further globalise cricket. Our goal is to make cricket more inclusive and popular than ever before," he was quoted as saying in the release. —*PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Army officer schools man over traffic violations

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

An Army officer in the City received widespread praise for schooling a traffic violator, as shown in a viral video circulating on social media. The video, originally captured on a dashcam and shared by X user Madhur (@ThePlacardGuy), depicts the officer confronting a motorist who was driving on the wrong side of the road. In the footage, the motorist, riding a scooter, initially confronts a car driver, demanding that the vehicle make way for him. As tensions escalate, an Army truck halts on the opposite side of the road, and an officer emerges. The officer is seen striking the motorist on the head and reprimanding him for his traffic infraction. When the motorist refuses to comply, the officer retrieves a stick from his vehicle and continues to enforce discipline. The incident drew the attention of nearby traffic police, and the motorist was soon seen moving to the correct lane. Kuldeep Jain, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Traffic for East Bengaluru said, "While we appreciate the public's desire to ensure traffic rules are followed, we advise against direct confrontation with violators. Citizens should document such incidents and report them through proper channels." DCP Jain emphasized the role of the Public Eye app, an initiative by Janaagraha's IChangeMyCity platform in collaboration with the Bengaluru Traffic Police. ***—Salar News***

Weitzman is South's Consul General of Israel

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

The Consulate General of Israel in Bengaluru on Tuesday announced the appointment of Orli Weitzman as the new Consul General of Israel to South India. Weitzman brings a wealth of diplomatic experience and a strong commitment to strengthening the ties between Israel and India, they said. The Consulate General of Israel said that Weitzman has held various key positions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel. As Consul General, Weitzman aims to foster greater cooperation in areas such as innovation, technology, agriculture, and education, building on the strong foundation of friendship and collaboration between the two nations. "I am honoured to serve as the Consul General of Israel to South India and look forward to working closely with the local government, businesses, and the vibrant community here. Together, we can explore new opportunities for mutual growth and continue to strengthen our partnership," Weitzman was quoted as saying in the statement. ***—PTI***

4 children injured after school ceiling collapses in M'luru

MANGALURU, 27 AUG

Four children were injured when the roof of a government school collapsed in Kuntur of Kadaba taluk in Dakshina Kannada district on Tuesday, officials said. The roof of the school collapsed while classes were in session and four children were injured, they said. The incident occurred when many children were playing outside in the field. The repair work of the building was underway and during the ongoing work, the roof collapsed, the officials said. The injured students were admitted to a hospital for treatment. Meanwhile, parents have expressed their displeasure over the "irresponsibility of the teachers" who made the students sit inside the building where repair work was going on. Parents have also complained to the Puttur field education officials about this. ***—PTI***

More streetlights, CCTVs, security for State docs' safety

Alarms in hospitals, docs to carry pepper spray

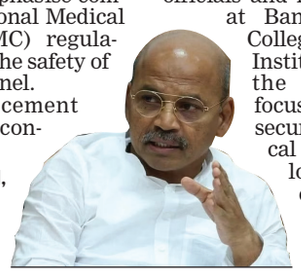
BENGALURU, 27 AUG

In the wake of growing concerns over the safety of women doctors, Minister for Medical Education and Skill Development Sharan Prakash Patil on Tuesday said the government will enhance security measures by adding more streetlights, CCTV cameras and trained security personnel at all medical colleges, super-specialty hospitals and hostels across the State.

Additional safety features include the placement of alarm bells and mobile gadgets at appropriate locations, as well as the installation of a pink box for receiving complaints. Doctors are advised to carry pepper spray at all times. The measures also emphasise compliance with National Medical Commission (NMC) regulations concerning the safety of healthcare personnel.

The announcement came after he convened a crucial meeting with officials and key stakeholders at Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute here where the discussions focused on bolstering security across medical institutions, following national outrage over the recent rape and murder of a woman doctor in Kolkata. "We are also prioritising safety in women's restrooms," he told reporters after the meeting. He further assured that these measures will be in line with guidelines set by the Central government and Supreme Court. Patil issued a stern warning against perpetrators of violence and sexual assault, stating that the government would take stringent action against people committing such offences. *—PTI*

The measures also emphasise compliance with NMC regulations concerning the safety of medicos ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***



Sharan Prakash Patil, Minister for Medical Education ***PHOTO: X/@S_PRAKASHPATIL***

BJP worker arrested for raping Karkala woman

KARKALA, 27 AUG

Karkala police have arrested Abhay, 23, a BJP worker, in the drugging and rape of a 21-year-old woman. Abhay, who is suspected to be involved in drug peddling, is alleged to have supplied narcotics to the prime accused, Altaf, who is now in custody.

According to a press release from Udupi Superintendent of Police K. Arun, Altaf, who had procured the drugs, used them to drug the victim before sexually assaulting her. Abhay is charged with aiding Altaf's escape following the heinous crime.

The police have filed a case against him under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS).

Altaf, along with his accomplice Xavier Richard Quadros, has also been apprehended. The victim's blood samples tested positive for narcotic substances, corroborating the claims of drug use. The incident reportedly unfolded on 23 August, when Altaf, having met the victim through social media, persuaded her to meet him.

He subsequently drove her to a remote location in Karkala, where Richard Quadros joined them. Quadros brought alcohol, which Altaf allegedly spiked with drugs before sexually assaulting the victim.

Authorities have dismissed allegations of 'Love Jihad' associated with the case, clarifying that the assault was perpetrated by a single individual. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

45-yr-old tusker electrocuted in Chikkamagaluru

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

A 45-year-old tusker was tragically electrocuted in a coffee estate in Chikkamagaluru, on Tuesday. The incident occurred in the early hours of Tuesday when the elephant accidentally came into contact with a live overhead wire. This has sparked concerns among the forest officials about the increasing number of wildlife deaths due to electrocution in the State. Forest officials rushed to the site after receiving information from estate workers, who discovered the elephant's body. A preliminary investigation confirmed that the cause of death was electrocution. Joseph Hoover, a former forest department board member, told Salar News, "The tusker's death is a significant loss, not only to the local ecosystem but also to the cultural and ecological heritage of the region. *—Salar News*

LAND ROW

BJP seeks Priyank's ouster as 1 more scam hits Cong

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

BJP on Tuesday petitioned the Karnataka Governor seeking the dismissal of Minister Priyank Kharge from Cabinet over the alleged allotment of a land to a trust run by his family including his father and Congress President M Mallikarjun Kharge.

Alleging "nepotism", Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Legislative Council Chalavadi T Narayanaswamy claimed that it is a case of criminal breach of trust from the Kharges towards the fellow Schedule Caste (SC) entrepreneurs.

However, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah defended the land allotment and said it has been done in accordance with law.

Priyank, who is the Minister for Electronics, IT/BT and Rural Development & Panchayat Raj, asserted that there was no illegality, and accused BJP of trying to indulge in politics.

Priyank Kharge ***PHOTO: X @PriyankKharge***

Priyank on Tuesday said BJP "lacks basic common sense" that CA sites are not allotted or auctioned; they have to be purchased as per Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) and government guidelines. For 193 sites, applications were invited and only 43 organisations had applied, he said. "So the allegations of nepotism, influence are baseless."

Asked about allegations regarding the land allotment, Siddaramaiah said "It has been done in accordance with law. Their trust is eligible, so we have done it."

Siddhartha Vihar Trust is being reportedly allotted five acres of land under the SC Quota by KIADB in Hi¬tech Defence Aerospace Park near Bengaluru out of the 45.94 acres meant for Civic Amenities (CA) in March, he said.

The trustees of the Trust include Mallikarjun, his wife Radhabai, son and Priyank, MP and son-in-law Radhakrishna Doddamani, and younger son Rahul Kharge, he further noted.

"...it is a case of criminal breach of trust from the Kharges towards the fellow SC entrepreneurs and I am of the opinion that this amounts to the breach of oath taken as the minister in Karnataka Government," he said. *—PTI*

Cong to take out march to Raj Bhavan for HDK's prosecution

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday said that the ruling Congress will take out a foot march to Raj Bhavan on 31 August, to submit a memorandum to the Governor, asking him to act on pending requests seeking sanction for prosecution, including against JD(S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy.

Also the State Congress Chief, Shivakumar said all the party legislators and parliamentarians from the State, including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, will participate.

He also took a dig at Kumaraswamy's claim that his signature was 'forged' on a file granting a mining lease to Sri Sai Venkateshwara Minerals in October 2007 when he was the Chief Minister, the case in connection with which the Lokayukta has sought Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's prosecution permission against him

Questioning as to why he did not file a complaint against forgery, Shivakumar, citing documents, claimed that the JD(S) leader had accepted before the court while seeking bail that he had recommended for mining lease.

Shivakumar further said the demand is not only regarding the Kumaraswamy's case, but all pending ones in which investigation is complete, like against former BJP Ministers -- Shashikala Jolle, Murugesh Nirani, G Janardhan Reddy, and also against those from the Congress if any.

Karnataka Cabinet on 22 August decided to give "aid and advice" to the Governor to grant sanction for prosecution of Kumaraswamy and the three former BJP Ministers. *—PTI*

Protesters rally at Bengaluru's Freedom Park on Tuesday against Governor Thawarchand Gehlot's order to prosecute Chief Minister Siddaramaiah ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

EXAM MODE ACTIVATED

Aspirants arrive at RC College in Bengaluru on Tuesday to take the Karnataka Public Service Commission examinations for State government jobs ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

'Effective governance key to developmental goals'

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said that effective governance is key to achieving the State's developmental goals and that the government is investing in technology and innovative solutions to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accountability in the administrative processes.

Addressing a meeting with NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Suman Bery here, the chief minister said that sustainability is at the core of the state government's development strategy. "We are committed to environmental conservation and are implementing policies aimed at reducing our carbon footprint. For example, Karnataka is a leader in renewable energy; 53 per cent of our installed capacity of 32 Giga Wats comes from renewable energy sources."Our efforts also include protecting natural resources and encouraging sustainable agricultural practices. We recognise that environmental stewardship is essential for long-term prosperity and quality of life," he said. He said the State government is investing in technology and innovative solutions to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accountability in administrative processes. *—PTI*

> "For example we have a strong set of e-Governance solutions. Using these we were able to roll out the five guarantees in a record time of less than three month," he said.

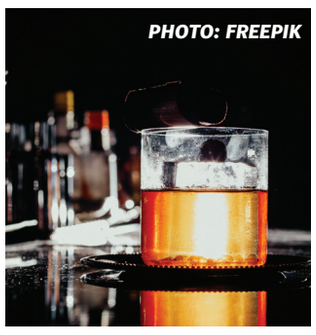


PHOTO: FREEPIK

PREMIUM LIQUOR TO BE CHEAPER AS STATE CUTS RATES

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

State government announced a reduction of up to 20 percent in rates for premium liquor brandson Tuesday.

According to K Bhasker the manager of a Maximum Retail Price (MRP) liquor shop in the City, the move was to prevent people from procuring premium alcohol from outside Karnataka.

"This move will boost the sale of liquor in the State and add to the revenue. Though the prices have been reduced slightly it will help boost the sales".

According to excise officials the State government has issued the final notification revising the duty on liquor and beer in comparison with that of other states. The revised rates will be effective from 27 August.

Prior to this move the state government faced revenue losses due to the high price of liquor in the state. The prices of premium liquor such as brandy, whisky were quite high in the state forcing customers to buy from the bordering states where the prices were comparatively lesser. Industry watchers said that the slash on premium liquor prices was to boost the local purchases and compensate for the revenue losses. *—Salar News*

4TH PRAWAAS SHOW

Buses to boycott transport exhibition over funds row

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

The Karnataka State Bus Owners Association, along with other states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh have announced a complete boycott of the upcoming PRAWAS 4.0 event, scheduled from 29 to 31 August, 2024, at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre.

The decision stems from concerns over financial misconduct and a lack of transparency by the event organiser, the Bus and Car Operators Confederation of India (BOCI).

PRAWAAS 2024 is the fourth edition of multimodal transport show that aims to unite public and private sector stakeholders in the bus and car industry to promote safe, smart, and sustainable public transport solutions.

Addressing the press conference at Bengaluru Press Club, Natraj Sharma, President of the Federation of Karnataka State Private Transport Association, said, "BOCI has consistently failed to uphold the interests of bus and car owners."

According to the press release, key issues driving the boycott include allegations of financial irregularities in past PRAWAS events, with BOCI refusing to disclose financial transaction details.

Karnataka state private bus owners association and Omni bus owners association and others also criticised BOCI's lack of transparency in decision-making and their failure to seek necessary amendments to AITP. Sharma said, "We have repeatedly raised concerns, but BOCI remains silent, likely to secure advertisements for PRAWAS 4.0."

Complaints against BOCI have been filed with Niti Aayog, Economic Offences Wing in Delhi, and Registrar of Societies. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

RAF personnel lathicharge during a protest march by Paschimbanga Chhatra Samaj activists to Nabanna (state secretariat) against the alleged rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor, in Howrah, on Tuesday; Police personnel deployed at Howrah Bridge ***PHOTOS: PTI***

BJP demands Didi's polygraph test, calls for bandh

After violence at students' rally, BJP accuses 'dictator' Mamata of shielding those involved in rape of medico

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

- BJP called for a 12-hour general strike to protest against the police action on those who took part in the march to state secretariat Nabbana on Tuesday.

Accusing West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of shielding those involved in the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata, BJP on Tuesday called her a "dictator" and demanded her resignation to ensure a fair probe into the matter.

BJP called for a 12-hour general strike to protest against the police action on those who took part in the march to state secretariat Nabbana on Tuesday. BJP has also demanded that the CBI conduct a polygraph test on Banerjee and Police Commissioner Vineet Goel, who the party alleged had initially said that the victim died by suicide.

BJP condemned the incident of lathicharge by the West Bengal Police on the students, who had taken out a rally in Kolkata demanding justice for the victim and the chief minister's resignation.

BJP co-incharge for West Bengal Amit Malviya said that Sanjoy Roy, accused in the trainee doctor rape and murder case, was on that fateful night riding a bike registered in the name of the Kolkata Police Commissioner, "as per the Kolkata Police and the TMC". Meanwhile, the ruling TMC claimed that the strike call exposed BJP's game plan to foment disturbances in the state exploiting people's pain.

BJP will also will launch a sit-in at Esplanade in the heart of Kolkata on 29 August.

The office of the state Women's Commission will be gheraoed and locked from outside on August 30, while there will be a chakka jam on 6 September.

To provide legal help to the arrested participants of Nabanna Abhijan, BJP has opened a helpline

West Bengal Police refuted Leader of Opposition in Assembly Suvendu Adhikari's claim that four student activists were "missing", saying that they were arrested for their alleged involvement in a conspiracy of murder as well as attempted murder. Without taking any name, the police said that the "missing" allegation was false and claimed that the four were reportedly planning to "orchestrate large-scale violence" during Nabanna Abhijan. *—PTI*

Cops detain a woman during a protest in Howrah, on Tuesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

CBI seeks polygraph test of cop close to Sandeep

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, 27 AUG

CBI has sought permission from a Kolkata court to conduct a polygraph test on city police assistant sub-inspector Anup Dutta who was said to be close to Sanjay Roy, the arrested accused in the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at RG Kar medical college, officials said Tuesday. CBI is exploring if Dutta helped Roy in any cover up of the crime, they said. According to reports, Dutta was allegedly instrumental in extending various favours to Roy, they said.The central probe agency is trying to find out if Roy told Dutta about the crime and received any help, they said Meanwhile, Enforcement Directorate filed a money laundering case to probe alleged financial irregularities at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital during the tenure of its former principal Sandip Ghosh and some others. The federal agency has taken cognisance of a CBI FIR to file its Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), equivalent to an FIR, under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). *—PTI*

Accused's bike is in top cop's name

KOLKATA, 27 AUG

Sanjoy Roy, the accused in the rape and murder of a PG student at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, was found to be using a bike registered under the name of Kolkata's Commissioner of Police.

Roy allegedly used the bike to visit red-light areas in north Kolkata on the day the crime took place. The bike and found that it was registered in 2014.

Roy worked as a civic volunteer with Kolkata Police. Responding to the claim, Kolkata Police said, "All government vehicle belonging to Kolkata Police are officially registered under the CP before being assigned to various units." *—PTI*

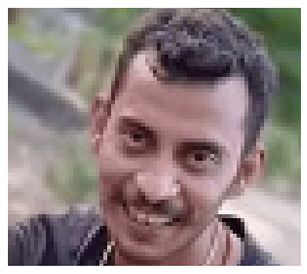


PHOTO: PTI

Bodies of two girls found hanging from tree in UP

FARUKKHABAD, 27 AUG

The bodies of two teenaged girls were found hanging from a tree in a mango orchard outside a village in Uttar Pradesh's Fatehgarh on Tuesday, with police launching an investigation into what it prima facie believed to be a case of double suicide. The Dalit girls, aged 18 and 15, had left their homes on Monday around 10pm to visit a nearby temple on the occasion of Janmashtami but did not return, police said, adding that both the girls were residents of the Bhagautipur village. The incident drew sharp criticism of law and order from the Samajwadi Party, Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said it was time to put "women's safety above party politics" as he called for an "impartial" inquiry into the matter. Superintendent of Police (Fathegarh) Alok Priyadarshi said the bodies were recovered outside a village in the Kayamganj police station area on Tuesday morning and a probe is underway in the matter. "The girls are said to be 15 and 18 years old. They are said to be close friends and lived in the same neighbourhood. The bodies were hanging with two 'dupattas' which were tied together. "The necks were tied at each end of the "dupatta" which went across the tree," Priyadarshi said. Prime facie it appears to be a case of suicide but the details could be ascertained only after the post-mortem report, he said. The district police chief said a mobile phone was found near the tree and a SIM card from the clothes of one of girls.*—PTI*

Rama Rao and BRS hail SC granting bail to Kavitha

HYDERABAD, 27 AUG

Bharat Rashtra Samithi Working President KT Rama Rao on Tuesday thanked the Supreme Court for granting bail to his sister and party MLC K Kavitha in the corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam and said justice has prevailed in the cases. Rama Rao was in Delhi in view of Kavitha's bail plea coming up in the Apex Court on Tuesday.

"Thank You Supreme Court. Relieved. Justice prevailed," he said on X.

Several BRS MLAs and other party leaders, who were also in Delhi, congratulated Rama Rao over the Top Court granting bail to Kavitha. BRS leaders celebrated the occasion and distributed sweets at the party's headquarters here. The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to Kavitha in the corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. *—PTI*

ALL ABOUT KAVITHA'S CASE

- 15 March, 2024: ED arrest Kavitha in excise policy scams
- 11 April, 2024: CBI takes her in for corruption
- 6 May, 2024: Delhi court denies bail to her in both cases
- 9 May, 2024: She moves HC seeking bail
- 15 May, 2024: She approaches HC for bail in CBI cases.
- 1 July, 2024: HC dismisses Kavitha's bail pleas
- 27 Aug, 2024: SC grants bail to Kavitha

NAGAON TRADERS STOP FISH SUPPLY TO UPPER ASSAM

NAGAON/SIVASAGAR, 27 AUG

A fish traders' association in Nagaon has decided to suspend the supply of fish to Upper Assam districts for an indefinite period after a section of the people targeted the Miya community over the gang-rape of a minor girl at Dhing in the district.

Around four quintals of fish are supplied daily from Nagaon to the Upper Assam region comprising nine districts.

'Miya' is originally a term used for Bengali-speaking Muslims and the non-Bengali speaking people generally identify them as Bangladeshi immigrants. After the Dhing rape, several groups in Upper Assam, especially in Sivasagar district, issued an ultimatum to the 'Miya' people, asking them to leave within one week. *—PTI*

MINOR'S RAPE ISSUE

Himanta: Will not let Miya Muslims take over Assam

GUWAHATI, 27 AUG

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said that he would take sides, and won't let 'Miya' Muslims "take over" the Assam.

Sarma was speaking in the Assembly on adjournment motions brought by the Opposition parties to discuss the law and order situation in the state in the backdrop of the rape of a 14-year-old girl in Nagaon.

Replying to the motion, he said the crime rate has not increased if the population growth is taken into account.

"Why will people from Lower Assam go to Upper Assam? So that Miya Muslims can take over Assam? We won't let it happen," he asserted.

Amid the heated debate, members of both treasury and Opposition benches stormed into the Well of the House.

PHOTO: PTI

Opposition parties in Assam held demonstrations in Guwahati alleging the failure of the government to protect women. Congress MLAs marched from inside the Assembly building to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi. "The Dhing incident is not the only one. After that also, many such cases have taken place in different parts of the state," Saikia said. A 14-year-old girl was raped by three people while she was returning home from tuition on 22 August.

MAYAWATI ELECTED AS BSP PRESIDENT UNOPPOSED

LUCKNOW, 27 AUG

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is "not disappointed" after the recent electoral reverses and will continue to work for the oppressed, Mayawati said here Tuesday after her re-election as the party president.

She was elected again to the top post unanimously at a special meeting of the BSP Central Executive Committee (CEC) and office bearers from all over the country, a statement said.

The party had failed to win a single seat in Uttar Pradesh in the Lok Sabha elections.

"Despite electoral reverses, the BSP is not disappointed. It is stoutly pursuing the goal and welfare principle of 'Bahujan Hitaye and Bahujan Sukhaye' (progress and prosperity of bahujans) on the strength of the Bahujan Samaj," she said. *—PTI*

DAMAGE CONTROL MODE

Govt blames Navy for Shivaji Maharaj statue collapse

MUMBAI, 27 AUG

Police in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district have registered a case against the contractor and the structural consultant in connection with the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue, officials said on Tuesday.

The 35-foot statue of the 17th century Maratha warrior king, unveiled by Pr ime Minister Narendra Modi.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj which collapsed in Sindhudurg district a day ago was built by the Navy, but the State government has now decided to install a bigger statue of the Maratha warrior king at the same place. A complaint was lodged by an assistant engineer of the Public Works Department. The artist and the consultant were responsible for the collapse of the statue. Before it was learnt that a local assistant engineer of the State Works Public Department had written to Coastal Security officer regarding the dilapidated state of the Statue due to rusted nuts and bolts used to assemble the parts. An FIR was registered against contractor Jaydeep Apte and structural consultant Chetan Patil under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut demanded the resignation of Eknath Shinde over this incident. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

BANNED MEMBERS OF JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI FILE J&K NOMINATIONS

SRINAGAR, 27 AUG

Several former members of the banned Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday filed nomination papers to contest the Assembly polls in the Union Territory as independent candidates.

Sugra Barkati, daughter of jailed separatist worker Sarjan Barkati, also filed nomination papers on behalf of her father. While Jamaat cannot take part in the elections due to the ban imposed on it by the Centre, it had shown interest in participating in the polls during the Lok Sabha elections if the ban were removed. Jamaat has not taken part in any elections after 1987 and had been a part of Hurriyat Conference. *—PTI*

BJP announces 29 more candidates for J&K polls

JAMMU/ NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

Despite resentment shown by some party leaders over selection of candidates for the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, BJP on Tuesday released its revised list of 29 nominees for the second and third phase, without making any major changes except replacing one contestant.

With the release of the fresh list, the party has so far named the candidates for 45 assembly segments, including nine in the Kashmir Valley where it has not been able to open its account in the past assembly elections.

BJP has made one change from the now-rescinded list, which was put out on Monday, as it has named former MLA Baldev Raj Sharma from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi seat in place of Rohit Dubey. All other names are the same for the same set of constituencies, announced yesterday before being withdrawn.

The party's latest list has 10 candidates for the second phase of polls and 19 for the third phase. BJP has so far not named its nominee for Nowshera, which was represented in 2014 by its current state president Ravinder Raina, and Gandhinagar, from where its another senior leader and former deputy chief minister Kavinder Gupta was elected in the last polls.

The party fielded Devender Singh Rana from his strong pocket borough Nagrota and named Satish Sharma as its candidate from Billawar. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Mathura: 120 hospitalised due to food poisoning

MATHURA, 27 AUG

More than 120 people, including women and children, were hospitalised due to food poisoning after consuming items made from buckwheat flour, officials said on Tuesday. A team from the District Food and Drug Administration raided and sealed the shops of two vendors supplying the contaminated buckwheat flour (kuttu atta), they said, adding a case has been registered against them. The incident was reported from several villages in the Farah police station area of Mathura district last night. All victims are stable, the officials said. The affected individuals -- who were fasting on the occasion of Janmashtami -- experienced symptoms such as vomiting, dizziness and shivering after eating 'puris' and 'pakodas' containing the flour. *—PTI*

Woman's severed limbs, headless body found in Pune

PUNE, 27 AUG

A woman's headless body with her limbs severed was found on the banks of the Mula river in Pune city, police said on Tuesday. The police control room received a call about the body on the river bed in the Chandannagar area around 11 am on Monday, an official said. As per preliminary probe, the woman was decapitated, and her hands and legs had been severed from the shoulders and hip joint, he said. The body was sent for post-mortem, and a case was registered under sections 103 (murder) and 238 (causing the disappearance of evidence) of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita with Chandannagar police station, the official said. A probe is underway to ascertain the woman's identity, and the police are also examining missing person's complaints, he said. *—PTI*

B'deshi student sent back for liking anti-India post

SILCHAR, 27 AUG

A Bangladeshi student studying at the National Institute of Technology, Silchar in Assam was sent back to her country after she reacted with a 'love' emoji to an anti-India post on social media, police said on Tuesday. Cachar Superintendent of Police Numal Mahatta claimed that it was "not deportation" but was just sent back in consultation with Bangladesh authorities. The SP said that Maisha Mahajabin, a student of fourth semester at Electronic and Communication department of NIT Silchar, was sent back to Bangladesh on Monday through the Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Sutarkandi in Karimganj district. *—PTI*

Wolves kill child, injure three others in Uttar Pradesh

BAHRAICH, 27 AUG

In a fresh attack by wolves in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich district, one child was killed and three others were injured, a senior forest department official said on Tuesday. This incident adds to a series of recent attacks, with five children having fallen victim to wolves in the past month and a half, the official said. Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Ajit Pratap Singh said the wolves attacked three children in a village on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday and by the time the response teams arrived, the wolves had already moved on to another village, where they killed a five-year-old child. The child's partially devoured body was found in a nearby field in the early hours of Tuesday, he said. He said six children have now died in similar attacks over past month and a half. *—PTI*

SC seeks Kerala's action on 2017 rape case

State gets 2 weeks time to place report on conspiracy behind sexual assault of actress

T'PURAM, 27 AUG

Supreme Court on Tuesday sought information from the State of Kerala regarding the number of witnesses remaining to be examined in the actress sexual assault case.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih asked the State's counsel to seek instructions on this aspect while considering the bail application of prime accused Sunil NS, also known as Pulsar Suni. Prominent Malayalam actor Dileep is charged in the case as a conspirator behind the abduction and sexual assault of the actress in a moving vehicle in the outskirts of Kochi in February 2017.

The counsel for Pulsar Suni, Advocate Sriram Parakkat, told the bench that the counsel for Dileep has been examining one Prosecution Witness (PW-261) for the past 95 days.

Justice Oka at this point asked the State, "seven years he(Pulsar Suni) is in custody. What is the progress in trial?".

State has been asked to place the record within 2 weeks *PHOTO: PTI*

The bench allowed two weeks time to the State's counsel to get instructions.

The State has also been asked to place on record a copy of the deposition of the said Prosecution Witness within 2 weeks.

The Apex Court has been monitoring the progress of the trial, receiving status reports from the trial judge from time to time.

Meanwhile, Malayalam film industry remained embroiled in controversy following the Justice Hema Committee Report's explosive revelations as AMMA president Mohanlal and its executive committee members stepped down on Tuesday, amid a slew of sexual allegations against various members.

—Salar with agencies

Bengali actor seeks probe on sexual abuse

Kolkata, 27 Aug

Citing the Hema Commission report unravelling the casting couch factor in Malayalam film industry, Bengali actor Ritabhari Chakraborty alleged that many such reports have similarity with her own experiences here. Tagging the CM, she said, "@mamataofficial we want a similar investigation, report and reform." Without specifying, Ritabhari accused a section of people and called for unmasking them. *—PTI*

Media misleading public perception: Suresh Gopi

THRISSUR, 27 AUG

Union Minister Suresh Gopi on Tuesday lashed out at the media, accusing it of misleading the public's perception about the film industry regarding the recent allegations of sexual harassment against actors and directors.

The actor-politician termed the allegations as "food" for the media and said they were welcome to make money out of it. He was responding to reporters' queries over the recent allegations of sexual harassment and abuse against various directors and actors, including CPI(M) MLA M Mukesh.

"You (media) are not only making people fight each other for your own gains, you are also misleading public perception. The complaints are in the form of allegations at the moment. What are you telling people? Are you the court? You are not. The court will decide. Let the court decide," Gopi said. *—PTI*

Suresh Gopi *PHOTO: PTI*

- The actor-politician termed the allegations as 'food' for the media and said they were welcome to make money out of it

7 dead, 15,000 relocated in Gujarat amid heavy rains

AHMEDABAD/DELHI/ SRINAGAR/ SHIMLA/ AGARTALA, 27 AUG

At least seven people have died in rain-related incidents in different parts of Gujarat, and heavy showers continued to pound the state for the third consecutive day on Tuesday, throwing normal life out of gear and flooding low-lying areas, officials said.

More than 15,000 persons have been relocated to safer places as water levels in dams and rivers rose amid incessant rainfall, they said.

Delhi

Several parts of Delhi received rainfall on Tuesday afternoon as the minimum temperature settled at 22.2 degrees Celsius, four notches below the season's average, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Jammu & Kashmir

The parts of Jammu & Kashmir likely to receive rains and thundershower till 3 September, officials of Meteorological Department said on Tuesday.

The officials said from 27 to 30 August there is a possibility of light to moderate rains and thundershower at many places of Jammu & Kashmir towards late night/early morning.

Himachal Pradesh

Rains lashed several parts of Himachal Pradesh on Tuesday, blocking vehicular movement on 85 more roads across the state and uprooting trees in the state capital.

The local meteorological office has issued a 'yellow' alert, forecasting heavy rains accompanied with thunderstorms and lightning at isolated places in the state for the next two days.

Tripura

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said the Centre will send a team to the state to assess the damage caused by the floods.

At least 26 people died as the floods devastated the state. A total of 17 lakh people were estimated to have been affected, and of them, 1.37 lakh were rendered homeless, officials said. *—PTI*

People wade through a waterlogged road at Ved Darwaja after heavy rainfall, in Gujarat on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

DAHI HANDI CELEBRATIONS

At least 41 'Govindas', youngsters involved in the formation of multi-storeyed human pyramids as part of the 'Dahi Handi' celebrations, were injured in Mumbai on Tuesday. Dahi Handi involves communities hanging a clay pot filled with yogurt (dahi) at a tall height. Young men form teams, make a human pyramid, and attempt to reach or break the pot during Krishna Janmashtami celebrations *PHOTO: PTI*

PATANJALI MISLEADING AD CASE

SC rejects apology over 'snide' remarks of IMA chief

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to accept the unconditional apology published by Indian Medical Association (IMA) chief RV Asokan in a newspaper over his "damaging" comments about the apex court in an interview to news agency PTI, saying the excerpt of the apology filed before it was "illegible" as the font was "minuscule".

Asokan had made the remarks while answering queries about Patanjali Ayurved Ltd's misleading advertisements case which was published in various publications.

A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Sandeep Mehta directed senior advocate P S Patwalia, appearing for Asokan, to file physical copies of 20 editions of The Hindu newspaper, where his apology was published, within one week. "We will not budge until we see advertisements in physical form, show us the actual size. No arguments till we see the advertisements... The excerpt of the apology filed before us is illegible in as much as the font is minuscule. Counsel for IMA president is directed to file physical copies of 20 publications of The Hindu where the publication of apology has been done within one week," the bench said.

IMA Chief RV Ashokan *PHOTO: PTI*

- Asokan had made the remarks while answering queries about Patanjali Ayurved Ltd's misleading advertisements case

As the hearing commenced, Patwalia submitted a list of publications where the apology has been published.

"What is the size? Who can read this? It is less than 0.10 cm," the bench said.

Patwalia said the IMA president was apologetic about the statement he made during the interview. A new bench will be constituted by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud after Justice Kohli retires.

The IMA's counsel had on 9 July told the bench that Asokan's unconditional apology has been published in the association's monthly publication, on the IMA's website, as also by PTI. *—PTI*

SC stays Centre's notice on drugs, cosmetic rules

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed a notification issued by the Ministry of Ayush, which omitted prohibition on ads of Ayurvedic, Siddha, and Unani drugs without approval.

A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Sandeep Mehta said the notification issued by the ministry was in the teeth of its 7 May, 2024 order.

Clamping down on misleading advertisements, the apex court on 7 May, 2024 had directed that before an advertisement is permitted to be issued, a self-declaration be obtained from the advertisers on the line of the Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994. Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj, appearing for the Centre, submitted that he will file an affidavit.

The Centre had earlier defended its August 2023, letter to states and Union territories asking authorities not to initiate action against any entity for violating Rule 170 of drugs, cosmetic rules. *—PTI*

Patient grabs doctor by hair, bangs head at Andhra hosp

In the video, junior doctor was attacked in the emergency medicine department of SVIMS, Tirupati *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

A woman junior doctor at Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences in Tirupati was attacked by a patient amid a nationwide outcry for better protection of doctors following the recent rape and murder at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital.

The footage shows the assailant grabbing her by the hair and banging her head against a hospital bed's steel frame before other doctors intervened and subdued the attacker.

In a letter to SVIMS director cum vice-chancellor Dr RV Kumar, the intern said she was on duty in the Emergency Medicine Department on Saturday. "... I was unexpectedly attacked by a patient, Bangaru Raju, who approached me from behind, pulled my hair and began forcibly banging my head against the steel rod of a cot," she wrote, adding that no security personnel were present at the site to help her. *—Agencies*

LANKAN NAVY ARRESTS 8 INDIAN FISHERMEN

CHENNAI, 27 AUG

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday told the Centre that eight more fishermen from the state have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy and expressed concern over the "alarming recurrence" of such arrests.

This was the second such incident within a week, with the Lankan Navy having apprehended 11 Indian fishermen on 23 August for alleged maritime boundary violation.

In the latest instance, eight fishermen who set sail from Rameswaram were arrested and their boat seized, Stalin told External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in a letter.

"At present, 116 fishermen and 184 boats are in Sri Lankan custody. The alarming recurrence of such incidents has caused immense distress to the families of the arrested fishermen." *—PTI*

FINDS STUDY

Pollution raises mortality in all age groups

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

In Indian districts, air pollution exceeding national standards have been shown to increase death risk across all age groups -- by 86 per cent in newborns, 100-120 per cent in children under five years of age and 13 per cent in adults, according to a study.

A team of researchers, including those at the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, looked at fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution levels across over 700 districts. Data for analysis was taken from the National Family and Health Survey (fifth round) and the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS).

In households not having a separate kitchen, the study found higher chances of deaths among newborns and adults.

Among newborns and children aged under five, the chances appeared to be almost two-fold and more than two-fold higher *PHOTO: PTI*

Among newborns and children aged under five, the chances "appeared to be almost two-fold and more than two-fold higher, respectively, in the districts of India where the PM2.5 concentration is up to the NAAQS level," the authors said in the study published in the journal GeoHealth.

Further, use of clean fuel and separate kitchens in households are very low in the middle and lower regions of the plain and in districts of central India. Forest-rich areas like Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and other northeastern states offer abundant firewood as an easily accessible unclean fuel option, along with crop residue and animal dung, the authors said.

The researchers called for raising awareness among people in vulnerable regions, where use of clean fuel is low and separate kitchens within households are not common, is very crucial for maintaining health air indoors. *—PTI*

JNUSU ends hunger strike after demands accepted

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union (JNUSU) ended their hunger strike early Tuesday morning after 17 days of protest against the university administration to press their demands.

According to the students' union, the hunger strike was called off after the JNU administration on Monday agreed to several of its key demands and provided assurances.

"Due to the worsening health of the hunger strikers, JNUSU has decided to call off the hunger strike. However, our struggle is far from over. The mode of protest has changed but the fight for our demands continues with renewed determination," the JNUSU said in a statement. The protest, which began on August 11 with 16 students sitting on an indefinite hunger strike, was concluded with only two participants remaining -- JNUSU President Dhananjay and Councillor Nitish Kumar -- after several students had to withdraw due to their deteriorating health conditions. The union claims the JNU administration has committed to increasing Merit-cum-Means (MCM) scholarships once additional funds are secured, extending these scholarships to students of the School of Education (SoE) and Management Studies.

Additionally, the administration has agreed to drop the inquiries initiated against students involved in a water protest outside the VC's residence and a sexual harassment case, it said. *—PTI*

A CHAIR AND CASTE BIAS

Shraddha Singh, the first woman sarpanch of Akouna village in Madhya Pradesh, claimed that the deputy sarpanch and the secretary denied her a chair during a meeting on 17 August as she is a Dalit. They asked her to bring one from home

PHOTO: X/@GitaSunilPillai

India's Paralympic team holds high hopes for Paris

Para-athletics team has been a major medal giver in the past & this time too as many as 38 names are in fray for the contribution ***PHOTO:@SPORTSGRAMINDIA***

The Games, as much a celebration of sporting skills as human endurance, club athletes with similar functional abilities in terms of movement, coordination and balance into various classifications. The "degree and nature of their eligible impairments" decide these groups.

For India, the para-athletics team has been a major medal giver in the past and this time too, it is expected to be the biggest contributor with as many as 38 names in fray.

Other top medal contenders include the likes of para-archer Sheetal Devi, who shoots with her legs as she was born without arms, landmine blast survivors Hokato Sema (shot putter) and Narayana Konganapalle (rower) and several other accident amputees.

Shooter Manish Narwal and shuttler Krishna Nagar are also among those who would be looking to defend their gold medals won in Tokyo.

Antil, whose left leg was amputated owing to an accident when he was 17, had also won gold in the para world championships in May and he is hoping to cross the 75m mark in Paris at the same venue where his able-bodied counterpart Neeraj Chopra won an Olympic silver earlier this month.

Lekhara was the best performer in Tokyo with one gold and a bronze and one of the two athletes to win two medals, the other being Singhraj Adhana (silver and bronze). Adhana, however, could not make the current team.

Lekhara was the first Indian woman to win a Paralympic gold medal. She is now primed to join the club of three medal winners in the Paralympics.

Current Paralympics Committee of India (PCI) President Devendra Jhajharia, a javelin thrower, is the most decorated Indian Paralympian with two gold (2004 Athens and 2016 Rio) and a silver (2021 Tokyo).

Joginder Singh Bedi won three medals in the 1984 Paralympics (silver in shot put, a bronze each in javelin and discus throw).

Deepthi Jeevanji (women's 400m T20; intellectual disability), Rio Olympics gold-medallist Mariyappan Thangavelu (men's high jump - T63), whose right leg was disabled after being run over by a bus, and Yogesh Kathuniya (men's Discus Throw - F56), born with a neurological disorder that damaged his nervous system, would be also aiming to add to their existing Paralympic medal tally. Shuttler Krishna Nagar (men's singles SH6), who has overcome the disadvantage of his short height, is also looking good to defend his gold medal won in Tokyo, more so after winning the title in the World Para Badminton Championships in Thailand in February. The other gold winner in Tokyo, Pramod Bhagat, is, however, serving suspension after whereabouts failure. Suhas Yathiraj (Men's Singles SL4 and Mixed Doubles SL3-SU5), who won a silver in Tokyo, will again be a medal contender. In para-archery, Sheetal and Harvinder Singh will be among the medal contenders. Harvinder had won a bronze in Tokyo in men's individual recurve open. Sheetal, the first and the only international para archery champion without upper limbs, bagged two gold medals in a stunning performance in the Asian Para Games in women's in individual compound and mixed doubles, and a silver in the women's doubles compound event.

In table tennis, after winning a silver in class 4 event in Tokyo, Bhavinaben Patel will hope to better the colour of the medal. The wheelchair-bound player is competing in women's singles S4 and women's doubles D10 events.

Antil and shot putter Bhagyashri Jadhav, who won a silver in the F34 event in Asian Para Games, will be the joint flag bearers at Wednesday's Opening Ceremony to be held outside a stadium for the first time in the history of Paralympic Games. *—PTI*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR

Kuno still struggles with high leopard population

Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park, the first home to translocated cheetahs in India, continues to struggle with a high leopard population and a low prey base, while the twin challenges have delayed preparations at the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary that will be the second site for cheetah introduction.

Summary records from meetings of the Centre's Cheetah Project Steering Committee reveal that prey augmentation and leopard management are among the major challenges facing the grand initiative since the reintroduction of cheetahs in India in September 2022.

The low prey density is also one of the reasons why cheetahs spent an extended period in enclosures in Kuno after being brought back from the wild in August last year, following the death of three cheetahs due to septicemia. As an interim solution, authorities have been introducing prey into both Kuno and Gandhi Sagar that is also in Madhya Pradesh. The high leopard population in both areas also prompted the initiation of a leopard translocation drive. But members of the committee have time and again emphasised the importance of "in-situ prey build up", saying "active prey augmentation through translocation cannot happen indefinitely". In a meeting on 18 June, Sanjay Raikhere, DFO Mandsaur, reported that there were 24 leopards in the 64 sq km enclosure being prepared for the new batch of cheetahs in Gandhi Sagar. According to sources, 15 leopards have been relocated from there so far.

Sources have told PTI that Gandhi Sagar is "not 100 per cent ready" for cheetahs, largely owing to the leopard and prey base challenges.

"We are working on making the fencing leopard-proof. We also need to improve the prey population both inside and outside the enclosure," a source said. Gandhi Sagar is spread across 368 sq km and has an additional 2,500 sq km area surrounding it. According to the "Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in Gandhi Sagar", five to eight cheetahs will be released into a 64 sq-km predator-proof fenced area in the first phase with a focus on breeding. The long-term goal is to establish a metapopulation of 60-70 cheetahs in the Kuno-Gandhisagar landscape. According to experts, the presence of dominant predators like leopards and lions influences cheetah's home range and space use. Cheetahs, known for their exceptional speed and agility, are adapted to hunt primarily in open habitats. In contrast, leopards are highly adaptable to a wide range of habitats and have a more versatile diet. As a result, cheetahs tend to avoid direct confrontation with leopards by choosing habitats and times when leopards are less active.

According to Project Cheetah's annual report for 2022-23, in Kuno, leopards were observed being chased away during encounters with cheetah coalitions.

Records obtained by PTI through an RTI application show that committee members have expressed serious concerns over prey and leopard-related challenges in nearly every meeting held so far. According to the summary record of the meeting dated 18 June, Rs 3.75 crore has been spent on grass revival in an area of around 5,000 hectares in Kuno, as part of habitat improvement efforts to sustain a healthy prey base. In the same meeting, Qamar Qureshi, a scientist at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), expressed concern over the low chinkara population in Gandhi Sagar (outside the enclosure) and emphasised the need to manage the high leopard density there. Steering Committee Chairman Rajesh Gopal stressed the need for an ecological, niche-based long-term solution to address the relative abundance of leopards. In a meeting held on 12 March, SP Yadav, the former head of Project Cheetah and advisor to the steering committee, said the high density of leopards at Kuno, along with comparatively low prey density, is a cause for concern. Gopal said grass revival should be carried out in a time-bound manner to support in-situ prey revival and that the translocation of leopards should follow a standard operating procedure. "This is important since the habitat is devoid of bigger cats like tiger or lion causing spatial/niche separation of leopards. High density of leopards would reduce the standing prey biomass," he said. In another meeting in December last year, Qureshi said prey assessment at Kuno revealed an average of 17 prey animals per sq km, with hotspots harbouring around 30-35 prey animals per sq km. The leopard population was found to be high, at 26 per 100 sq km.

Qureshi gave a presentation on Kuno's prey base, noting that it had 91 leopards, and that the prey population was "too low to release all the cheetahs into the wild". *—PTI*

Gamini, a female cheetah aged about five years brought from Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa, has given birth to five cubs ***PHOTO: ANI***

What's the mystery behind Telegram founder Durov's arrest?

Pavel Durov, the founder and CEO of the messaging app Telegram, was arrested in Paris over the weekend over allegations that his platform is being used for illicit activity such as drug trafficking and the distribution of child sexual abuse images.

Durov, who was born in Russia, spent much of his childhood in Italy and is a citizen of France, Russia, the Caribbean island nation of St. Kitts and Nevis and the United Arab Emirates. He was taken into custody at Paris-Le Bourget Airport in France on Saturday after landing from Azerbaijan.

In a statement posted to its platform, Telegram said it abides by EU laws and its content moderation is "within industry standards and constantly improving." Durov, the company added, "has nothing to hide and travels frequently in Europe." Here are some details on Telegram, the app at the center of Durov's arrest.

What is Telegram?

Telegram is an app that allows for one-on-one conversations, group chats and large "channels" that let people broadcast messages to subscribers. Unlike rivals such as Meta's WhatsApp, Telegram's group chats allow as many as 200,000 people, compared to a maximum of 1,024 for WhatsApp. Experts have raised concerns that misinformation spreads easily in group chats of this size. Telegram offers encryption for their communications, but — contrary to a popular misconception — this feature is not on by default. Users have to switch on the option to encrypt their chats. It also doesn't work with group chats. That contrasts with rival Signal and Facebook Messenger, where chats are encrypted end-to-end by default. Telegram says it has more than 950 million active users. It is widely used in France as a messaging tool, including by some officials in the presidential palace and in the ministry behind the investigation into Durov. But French investigators have also found the app has been used by Islamic extremists and drug traffickers.

Telegram was launched in 2013 by Durov and his brother Nikolai. According to Telegram, Pavel Durov supports the app "financially and ideologically while Nikolai's input is technological."

Before Telegram, Durov founded VKontakte, Russia's largest social network. The company came under pressure amid the Russian government's crackdown after mass pro-democracy protests rocked Moscow at the end of 2011 and 2012. Durov said government authorities demanded that the VKontakte take down the online communities of Russian opposition activists. It later asked the platform to hand over the personal data of users who took part in the 2013 uprising in Ukraine, which eventually ousted a pro-Kremlin president.

The application Telegram said it abides by EU laws and its content moderation is "within industry standards and constantly improving" ***PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/DUROV***

But Durov sold his stake in VKontakte after pressure from Russian authorities in 2014. He also left the country. Today, Telegram is based in Dubai, which Durov called "the best place for a neutral platform like ours to be in if we want to make sure we can defend our users' privacy and freedom of speech" in an April interview with conservative talk show host Tucker Carlson.

Why was Durov arrested?

French media has reported that Durov was detained on an arrest warrant alleging his platform has been used for money laundering, drug trafficking and other offenses. As of Monday afternoon, he had not been charged, and few details were available on the investigation. On Sunday night, a French investigative judge extended Durov's detention order, French media reported on Monday. Under French law, Durov can remain in custody for questioning for up to four days. After that, judges must decide to either charge him or release him.

What has been the response?

In Russia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov declined to comment on reports of Durov's arrest in France. "We still don't know what exactly Durov is being accused of," Peskov said Monday during his daily media conference call. "We haven't heard any official statements on that matter." "Let's wait until the charges are announced – if they are announced," Peskov said. Russian government officials have expressed outrage at Durov's detention, with some calling it politically motivated and proof of the West's double standard on freedom of speech. The outcry has raised eyebrows among Kremlin critics: in 2018 Russian authorities themselves tried to block Telegram but failed, withdrawing the ban in 2020. Elsewhere, Elon Musk, the billionaire owner of X who has called himself a " free speech absolutist," has been speaking out in support of Durov and posted "#freePavel" following the arrest. In a statement posted on its platform after his arrest, Telegram said it abides by EU laws, and its moderation is "within industry standards and constantly improving."

"It is absurd to claim that a platform or its owner are responsible for abuse of that platform," Telegram's post said. "Almost a billion users globally use Telegram as a means of communication and as a source of vital information. We're awaiting a prompt resolution of this situation. Telegram is with you all."

Does Telegram moderate content?

Western governments have often criticised Telegram for a lack of content moderation, which experts say opens up the messaging platform for potential use in money laundering, drug trafficking and the sharing of material linked to the sexual exploitation of minors.

Compared to other messaging platforms, Telegram is "less secure (and) more lax in terms of policy and detection of illegal content," said David Thiel, a Stanford University researcher, who has investigated the use of online platforms for child exploitation, at its Internet Observatory. In addition, Telegram "appears basically unresponsive to law enforcement," Thiel said, adding that messaging service WhatsApp "submitted over 1.3 million CyberTipline reports in 2023 (and) Telegram submits none."

In 2022, Germany issued fines of 5.125 million euros ($5 million) against the operators of Telegram for failing to comply with German law. The Federal Office of Justice said that Telegram FZ-LLC hasn't established a lawful way for reporting illegal content or named an entity in Germany to receive official communication. *—AP*

PHOTO: PTI

4 killed in suicide attack on former militant in Pak

NORTH WAZIRISTAN, AUGUST 27

A suicide attack in the Razmak area of North Waziristan on Monday resulted in the deaths of four individuals and left 15 others injured. The attack targeted a vehicle belonging to Usman alias Liwanay, a former militant commander who has since surrendered to the state. The explosion occurred around 11:30 AM and, despite the severity of the attack, Liwanay was unharmed, reported Dawn News. The victims included two individuals whose bodies were so severely mutilated that their identities remain unknown. The injured, including the two deceased, were transported to the Miramshah Hospital, where an emergency was declared immediately following the blast. *—ANI*

US soldier who fled to N Korea to plead guilty

WASHINGTON, 27 AUG

An Army private who fled to North Korea just over a year ago will plead guilty to desertion and four other charges and take responsibility for his conduct, his lawyer said Monday. King's attorney, Franklin D. Rosenblatt, told The Associated Press, that King intends to admit his guilt to military offenses, including desertion and assaulting an officer. Nine other offenses, including possession of sexual images of a child, will be dismissed under the terms of the deal. King will be given an opportunity at a Sept. 20 plea hearing at Fort Bliss, Texas, to discuss his actions. "He wants to take responsibility for the things that he did," Rosenblatt said. He declined to comment on a possible sentence that his client might face. Desertion is a serious charge and can result in imprisonment for as much as three years. His run into North Korea came soon after he was released from a South Korean prison .*—AP*

Malaysia charges ex-PM over alleged royal insult

KUALA LUMPUR, 27 AUG

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin was charged Tuesday with sedition over a speech he made that allegedly questioned the integrity of the country's previous king. Muhyiddin, who led Malaysia from March 2020 until August 2021, pleaded not guilty in a court in northeast Kelantan state. According to the charge sheet, Muhyiddin made the seditious remarks last month during a by-election campaign in Kelantan. Nine ethnic Malay state rulers take turns as Malaysia's king for five-year terms under the country's rotating monarchy, which began when Malaysia gained independence from Britain in 1957. *—AP*

Pope will visit the Istiqlal mosque in Indonesia

JAKARTA, 27 AUG

When Pope Francis begins his Asia tour next week, one of his early stops will be at Indonesia's iconic Istiqlal mosque. The 87-year-old head of the Catholic Church will hold an interfaith meeting with representatives of the country's six officially recognized religions as the populous Southeast Asian nation faces growing challenges to its tolerant image. Francis, who has suffered a slew of health problems and has become increasingly reliant on a wheelchair, has a rigorous schedule during his four-nation visit. He will start his trip in Jakarta on Sept. 3, where he will meet Indonesian President Joko Widodo. The mosque of Istiqlal, which means independence in Arabic, is the largest in Southeast Asia, covering over 22 acres. Its name is a constant reminder of the country's fight against Dutch colonialists who ruled it for nearly 350 years. *—AP*

UN aid ops halt in Gaza after Israeli evacuation orders

Israeli airstrikes across the Gaza Strip killed at least 14 people

PALESTINE, 27 AUG

The United Nations has been forced to halt its aid operations in Gaza due to Israel's new evacuation orders for Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, a senior UN official says.

Briefing journalists on Monday at UN headquarters in New York, the official said: "We're unable to deliver today with the conditions that we're in." The official noted how the UN had relocated its main command operations for the Gaza Strip and most UN personnel to Deir el-Balah after Israel ordered the evacuation of Rafah in southern Gaza in May.

"Where do we move now?" the official asked, adding that UN staff had to be moved so quickly that equipment was left behind. "We're not leaving [Gaza] because the people need us there. We're trying to balance the need of the population with the need for safety and security of the UN personnel," the official stressed.

Speaking after the official's briefing, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric clarified that UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, is able to continue to operate because it is embedded within the population and the issue being described by the official is the transfer of aid across the Palestinian enclave.

Palestinians check bodies of their relatives killed in the Israeli bombardment of Gaza Strip, at a hospital morgue in Deir al-Balah on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Palestinian officials say Israeli airstrikes across the Gaza Strip have killed at least 14 people, half of them children. The Civil Defence, first responders who operate under the Hamas-run government, said three children and their mother were killed in an airstrike late Monday in the Tufah neighbourhood of Gaza City. It said three other people were missing after the strike.

Another strike late Monday hit a building in downtown Gaza City, killing a child, three women and a man, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

In southern Gaza, a strike on a home early Tuesday killed five people, including a man, his three children as young as 3 years old and a woman, according to a casualty list provided by Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, where the bodies were taken. *—Al Jazeera/ AP*

BOYCOTT CALL

Anura Kumara Dissanayake, Presidential candidate of Opposition political party at the launching of election manifesto in Sri Lanka *PHOTO: PTI*

Prez poll in Lanka triggers curiosity in Tamil regions

COLOMBO, 27 AUG

A hardline Tamil nationalist party has launched a campaign to boycott the September 21 presidential election, saying that no major candidate has pledged for the federal set-up for political autonomy for Tamils in the North and East of the country, local election monitoring groups said on Tuesday.

Moreover, Selvaraja Kajendran, the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF) general secretary, has lodged a complaint against the police for obstructing their leaflets distribution campaign on Saturday in the eastern region of Thirukkovil.

Kajendran said they have called for a boycott of the election as no major candidate has so far pledged to set up a federal set-up for Tamil regions in the north and east to cater to the Tamil demand for political autonomy. Meanwhile, the Tamil votes in the next month's election have been sent into turmoil with different Tamil groups pulling in different directions.

The main Tamil party Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is yet to make its position official on supporting which of the front runners from the majority Sinhalese community.

A section of TNA has also expressed support for a common Tamil candidate fielded against the party's wishes. *—PTI*

SL Prez poll: Dissanayake a strong contender

A political alliance cantered on the working class has emerged as a strong contender in Sri Lanka's presidential race, announcing itself to be the agent of change that millions of people called for when an unprecedented economic crisis led to disillusionment with traditional political parties. Anura Kumara Dissanayake, leader of National People's Power alliance says he's serving those who were part of public protests that ousted then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2022. *—PTI*

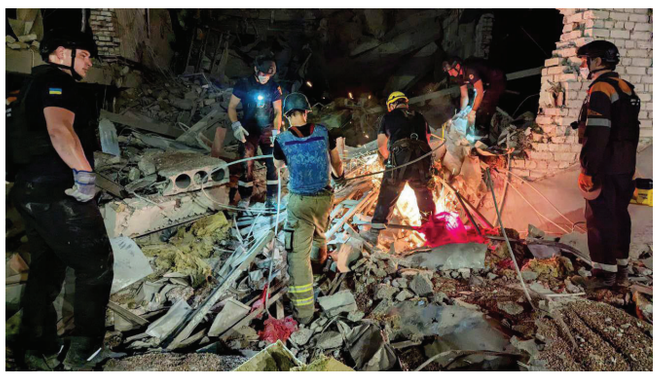
Russia strikes across Ukraine, 3 killed

KYIV, 27 AUG

Nighttime Russian drone and missile attacks struck across Ukraine, killing at least two people and starting fires on the outskirts of the capital, officials said Tuesday, a day after a heavy barrage that struck energy facilities throughout the country.

Two people died in a strike on a residential building in Kryvyi Rihstruck, a mining and industrial city in Ukraine's south, according to Oleksandr Vilkul, head of the city's military administration.

In the Kyiv region, which had struggled with blackouts after Monday's onslaught, five air alerts were called during the night. The regional administration said air defenses destroyed all the drones and missiles that Russia fired, but that falling debris set off forest fires.



At least two people died in a strike on a residential building in Kryv Rihstruck on Tuesday *PHOTO: X@ALICEZHURAVEL*

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described Monday's barrage of more than 100 missiles and a similar number of drones as "vile."

The strikes hit civilian infrastructure and most of the country was targeted, he said. "The energy infrastructure has once again become the target of Russian terrorists," Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said Monday. *—AP*

China calls for more support for Ukraine peace

BANGKOK, 27 AUG

China called on Tuesday for more countries to endorse its peace plan for Ukraine, after a round of diplomacy with Indonesia, Brazil and South Africa to support its plan. Envoy Li Hui called the three countries representative of the Global South and "important forces in promoting world peace". "They have maintained communication with both Russia and Ukraine." *—AP*

Hasina's ouster marks a watershed moment

DHAKA, 27 AUG

The recent student movement in Bangladesh, culminating in the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, marks a watershed moment in the nation's political landscape, fuelled by a 70-year legacy of student activism from the 1952 Language Movement to the Liberation War and beyond.

Political analysts and observers view the recent student protests, which many in Bangladesh have christened as the "Bangla Spring" — taking a cue from the Arab Spring — or the "Monsoon Revolution," as a watershed moment in Bangladesh's political landscape, driven by the same spirit of activism that has characterised student movements in the country for over 70 years, even before its independence in 1971, when it was known as East Pakistan.

The latest movement, which began in July 2024, was sparked by the Court's decision to reinstate a controversial job quota system, a move that reignited long-standing frustrations among students and the general public.

"The students' movement has always played a vital role in charting the course of Bangladesh's history and policies even before the Liberation War of 1971. But this time, the students' movement was different and on a scale that had never been witnessed before." *—PTI*

Dismiss petition seeking AL ban: Attorney Gen

Attorney General Advocate Md Asaduzzaman has called for the dismissal of a writ petition seeking to ban the Awami League. A High Court bench comprising Justice AKM Asaduzzaman and Justice Muhammad Mahbub Ul Islam heard the petition on Tuesday. During the hearing, the attorney general told the court that the interim government had no decision to ban any political party. *—PTI*

Africa to get 100K mpox vaccine doses from Germany

BERLIN, 27 AUG

Germany on Monday announced that it would donate 100,000 doses of mpox vaccine to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other African nations in hopes of getting an outbreak of the disease under control.

The gift will all but wipe out the German military's reserve of roughly 1,18,000 doses.

Berlin will also lend financial support to its effort, providing funding to the World Health Organization as well as supporting partners in Africa through the Gavi Vaccine Alliance. Government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said Berlin's aim is, "to support in solidarity the international efforts to contain mpox in Africa." Hebestreit, noting that these were immediate-term measures, added that Berlin would also work alongside the African Union to foster local vaccine production. *—DW*

Sullivan visits Beijing to manage worn relations

BEIJING, 27 AUG

A top White House official arrived in China on Tuesday for talks on a relationship that has been severely tested during President Joe Biden's term in office. Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, was greeted at a Beijing airport by Yang Tao, the Chinese foreign ministry's chief for the North American and Oceanian department, and the U.S. ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns.

Sullivan has been Biden's point person for often unannounced talks with the Communist Party's top foreign policy official to try to manage the growing differences between Washington and Beijing. The goal of his visit, which lasts through Thursday, is limited — to try to maintain communication in a relationship that broke down for the better part of a year in 2022-23 and was only nursed back over several months.

No major announcements are expected, though Sullivan's meetings could lay the groundwork for a possible final summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping before Biden steps down in January.

He had initially stepped down when he took the party post, a more senior position, but he returned about seven months later, in July 2023, after his successor was removed for reasons that have not been made public. *—AP*

US national security adviser Jake Sullivan greets Wang Yi the director of Communist Party's Central Foreign Affairs on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

China is 'the biggest disruptor' of peace: Philippines

MANILA, 27 AUG

The Philippine defence chief said Tuesday that China is "the biggest disruptor" of peace in Southeast Asia and called for stronger international censure over its aggression in the South China Sea, a day after China blocked Philippine vessels from delivering food to a Coast Guard ship at the Sabina Shoal.

Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr spoke at an international military conference organized in Manila by the US Indo-Pacific Command amid a spike in clashes between China and the Philippines in the disputed South China Sea and in its airspace. China is "the biggest disruptor of international peace" in Southeast Asia, Teodoro told the conference, which was attended by military officials and senior diplomats from the US and allied countries.

He later told reporters on the sidelines of the conference that international statements of concern against China's increasingly assertive actions in the disputed waters and elsewhere were "not enough." "The antidote is a stronger collective multilateral action against China," Teodoro said. *—AP*

AHEAD OF PRESIDENTIAL POLL

US pressure on Covid was wrong: Zuckerberg

WASHINGTON, 27 AUG

Mark Zuckerberg, co-founder of the social media service Facebook and CEO of its parent company Meta, claimed on Tuesday that the Biden administration pressured the company to "censor" specific Covid-19 content during the pandemic.

"In 2021, senior officials from the Biden Administration, including the White House, repeatedly pressured our teams for months to censor certain Covid-19 content, including humor and satire, and expressed a lot of frustration with our teams when we didn't agree," Zuckerberg said in a letter. He said they made the final decision to remove content and take responsibility for changes to the Covid-19 policies under pressure.

Mark Zuckerberg said in 2021, senior officials from Biden Administration pressured the team to censor certain Covid *PHOTO: X@MATJENDAV4*

"I believe the government pressure was wrong and I regret that we were not more outspoken about it," he said. "I feel strongly that we should not compromise our content standards due to pressure from any administration in either direction — and we're ready to push back if something like this happens again," he said.

Zuckerberg also confirmed that he would not provide additional funding to support electoral infrastructure through the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, his philanthropic organisation. He explained that the previous contributions had been perceived as "benefiting one party over the other." "My goal is to be neutral and not play a role one way or another — or to even appear to be playing a role. So I don't plan on making a similar contribution this cycle," he said. Meanwhile, the US House Judiciary Committee, aligned with the Republican Party, shared information about Zuckerberg's letter on X. *—Courtesy, Anadolu*

AUS TO ACCEPT 270K INT'L STUDENT ENROLMENTS

SYDNEY, 27 AUG

The industry has called the limit on international students damaging and "a handbrake" on the sector's growth, in response to the announcement made this morning. The national planning level for 2025 sets a total cap of 2,70,000 new international student commencements, making a clear distinction between higher education and vocational education and training sectors.

Publicly funded universities will be allocated 1,45,000 new international student commencements next year, which is around 2023 levels, while this number will be set at around 30,000 next year for other private universities and for non-university higher education providers – estimated to be around 2019 levels. Similarly, VET providers face a cap of 95,000 new international student commencements. But in a positive turn of events, students taking standalone English language courses will not be impacted by the cap. The government said: "Providers with a higher ratio of international students will receive a lower allocation, encouraging them to diversify their student base."*—Courtesy, PIE News/ Al Jazeera*

- Publicly funded universities will be allocated 1,45,000 new international student commencements next year

ZEE, SONY SETTLE DISPUTE, TERMINATE $10B MERGER

The firms have decided to withdraw all claims against each other

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) and Sony Pictures Networks India on Tuesday said they have settled their six-month-long dispute related to the failed USD 10-billion merger and have agreed to withdraw all claims against each other.

Both ZEE and Sony had claimed a termination fee of USD 90 million (around Rs 748.7 crore) from each other for not complying to Merger Cooperation agreement (MCA) signed in December 2021.

Sony moved before Singapore International Arbitration Center (SIAC) two days after the termination of the deal, saying ZEEL did not satisfy the merger conditions, initiated arbitration proceedings and claimed a termination fee of USD 90 million.

This was contested by ZEEL before the SIAC, which denied any interim relief to Sony against the Indian broadcaster.

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd share price jumped as much as 15 per cent on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

ZEEL also moved the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) seeking implementation of the proposed merger and later withdrew its plea.

Later in May, ZEEL terminated the MCA in 23 May, 2024, and it also sought a termination fee of USD 90 million from Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI), now known as Culver Max Entertainment, and Bangla Entertainment (BEPL).

In January this year, Sony had pulled out from the proposed USD 10.5-billion merger with ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd citing failure to meet certain "closing conditions" by the Indian firm.

ZEEL and SPNI agreed to merge on 22 December, 2021.

The Mumbai bench of NCLT had on 10 August, 2023, approved the scheme of merger of ZEEL with Sony group entities Culver Max Entertainment and BEPL, which could have created a USD 10 billion media entity.

However, two years after that Sony Corporation announced the termination of the agreement on 22 January, 2024.

After the termination of the deal, both companies are pursuing their independent course. ZEEL is facing financial hurdles, which it is trying to handle through several initiatives. It has reported a net profit of Rs 118 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal.

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd share price jumped as much as 15 per cent on Tuesda y. Zee stock jumped to an intraday high of Rs 154.9, before cooling off to Rs 147.7, still up about 10 percent from the previous close..

Rupee falls 5 paise to close at 83.92 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 27 AUG

The rupee depreciated by 5 paise to close at 83.92 (provisional) against the American currency on Tuesday, on overnight jump in crude oil prices and a surge in commodity prices. However, positive domestic markets and a soft US dollar cushioned the downside, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.91 and touched an intra-day low of 83.95 against the US dollar. The domestic currency finally settled at 83.92 (provisional), 5 paise lower from its previous close. On Monday, the Indian rupee settled for the day 3 paise higher at 83.87 against the American currency. *—PTI*

Gold climbs ₹550 to ₹74K per 10; silver rallies ₹1,200

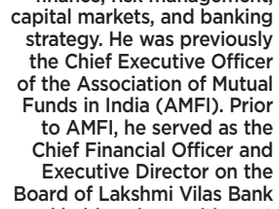
NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

Gold prices climbed Rs 550 to Rs 74,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday on the back of fresh demand from local jewellers. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 73,800 per 10 grams in the previous session on Friday. Silver prices also rallied Rs 1,200 to Rs 88,200 per kg on Tuesday from Rs 87,000 per kg in the previous close, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also jumped Rs 550 to Rs 74,000 per 10g. Traders attributed the rise in yellow prices due to a pick-up in demand by local jewellers and retailers in the domestic market. The bullion markets were closed in New Delhi on Monday on account of Krishna Janmashtami.. *—PTI*

HCLTech, Xerox expand 15-year-old partnership

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

Indian IT major HCLTech has expanded its 15-year-old partnership with Xerox to assist the American firm in rejig its operations with the help of AI and digital engineering. HCLTech shares on Tuesday climbed 2 per cent to hit a 52-week high of Rs 1,757 on the BSE in intraday trade. HCLTech will assist Xerox with its "reinvention" -- the fundamental and structural redesign of the company to position it for "long-term profitable and sustainable growth", a company statement said. HCLTech will support the Xerox Global Business Services organisation (GBS) to drive key business metrics like working capital, device connectivity, sales efficiency and the effectiveness of problem-solving, it added.*—PTI*



Paytm appoints Srinivasan as non-executive head

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

Fintech firm One97 Communications, owner of Paytm brand, on Tuesday announced the appointment of Narasinganallore Venkatesh Srinivasan as the non-executive independent director of its wholly-owned subsidiary Paytm Money. Srinivasan had earlier chaired the Reserve Bank of India's Technical Advisory Committee for the fixed income, money markets and derivatives association (FIMMDA). He was a management committee member of the Foreign Exchange Dealers' Association of India (FEDAI). Srinivasan has multi-year experience in finance, risk management, capital markets, and banking strategy. He was previously the Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI). Prior to AMFI, he served as the Chief Financial Officer and Executive Director on the Board of Lakshmi Vilas Bank and held senior positions at IDBI Bank for 19 years, including Chief Financial Officer and Executive Director. *—PTI*

AMID TENSE MIDDLE EAST

Markets settle almost flat; Nifty hits lifetime high

MUMBAI, 27 AUG

PHOTO: PTI

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended on a flat note after a volatile session on Tuesday due to the emergence of profit-taking amid rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and Ukraine.

The NSE gauge, however, hit a new lifetime peak of 25,017.

After oscillating between highs and lows, the 30-share BSE Sensex eked out a marginal gain of 13.65 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 81,711.76 - its sixth consecutive session of rise.

During the day, it hit a high of 81,919.11 and a low of 81,600.51.

The NSE Nifty ended almost flat, up 7.15 points or 0.03 per cent, at 25,017.75 -- its ninth straight session of gains.

On the Sensex chart, Bajaj Finserv, Maruti, Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finance, Infosys, Axis Bank and ICICI Bank were the biggest gainers.

Hindustan Unilever, JSW Steel, Titan, NTPC and Tata Motors were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory, while Seoul and Shanghai ended lower.

European markets were trading higher in mid-session deals. The US markets ended mostly lower in the overnight trade on Monday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 483.36 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.84 per cent to USD 80.75 a barrel. *—PTI*

Kalpataru gets tax notice from Afghanistan govt

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

PHOTO: PTI

Kalpataru Projects International Ltd on Tuesday said it has received a tax notice from the Afghanistan government for non-submission of certain declarations.

In an exchange filing, the company said, "The branch office through its consultant... received certain tax challans from the Ministry of Finance, Afghanistan Revenue Department with the demand of payment of tax liability, additional tax and fine, due to non-submission of certain declarations for FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22."

The notice was received on 26 August, it said.

The authority has demanded tax liability of AFN 8,774,153 (Rs 104.59 lakh), additional tax of AFN 12,150 (Rs 0.14 lakh) and fine of AFN 166,401 (Rs 1.98 lakhs), Kalpataru Projects International Ltd said.

The branch anticipates this additional tax and fine may be waived off by the Ministry of Finance once the payment towards the tax liability is discharged, it said.

Last week, the company also received a tax notice from the GST authority in India. The authority has demanded a total tax payment of Rs 10.50 lakh along with a penalty of Rs 1.50 lakh. The authority has also proposed to levy interest as applicable. *—PTI*

TROUBLE OVER TDS

Hindustan Unilever faces tax demand of Rs 962 crore

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

As news of the tax demand broke, HUL's shares remained relatively stable **PHOTO: PTI**

Hindustan Unilever (HUL) has been slapped with a tax demand of Rs 962.75 crore by the Income Tax Department.

The notice pertains to the company's failure to deduct Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) on a remittance of Rs 3,045 crore made to acquire the intellectual property rights (IPR) of India Health Food Drink (HFD) from the GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Group.

The acquisition, which concluded in 2019, brought iconic brands like Horlicks, Boost, Maltova, and Viva under HUL's umbrella. While the company has expressed its intention to appeal against the tax demand, it has assured that the notice will not have a significant financial impact on its operations.

HUL has stated that it has a strong case on merits to defend its position and will undertake all necessary steps to challenge the tax notice. The company has also highlighted its indemnification right, which allows it to recover the tax demand from the appropriate parties. As news of the tax demand broke, HUL's shares remained relatively stable, trading at Rs 2,819 in early deals on the BSE. *—Agencies*

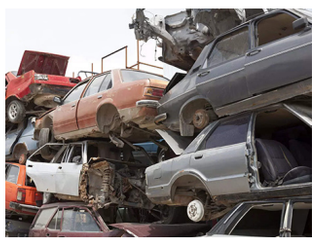


PHOTO: PTI

Now, scrap old car to save big on next buy

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

Ahead of the festive season, several leading commercial and passenger vehicle manufacturers have agreed to offer discounts on new vehicle purchases against scrapped old vehicles, an official statement said on Tuesday.

The statement further said this initiative is a significant step forward in advancing India's circular economy, promoting the use of cleaner, safer and more efficient vehicles.

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday chaired a meeting with the SIAM delegation at Bharat Mandapam, where he addressed pressing issues in the automobile industry.

It said commercial vehicle manufacturers are willing to offer discounts for a limited period of two years and passenger vehicle manufacturers are willing to offer discounts for a limited period of one year.

The statement noted that these discounts will further incentivise the scrapping of vehicles, thereby ensuring the plying of safer, cleaner and more efficient vehicles on the roads. *—PTI*

Airtel Xstream customers will be able to explore content on Apple TV+, which will come bundled with Airtel WiFi **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

Airtel ties up with Apple to offer TV+; shuts Wynk app

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

Airtel customers will get to access Apple TV+ and Apple Music content through video streaming platform Xstream and Wynk Music app later this year.

Airtel and Apple have signed a deal to this effect, the telecom operator said in a statement on Tuesday.

Under the partnership, Airtel Xstream customers will be able to explore Hollywood and award-winning content on Apple TV+ which will come bundled with premium Airtel WiFi and postpaid plans.

Similarly, Apple Music will be accessible for Wynk Premium users, according to the statement.Airtel to shut down Wynk Music app, absorb all employees Bharti Airtel will exit from music vertical and shut down its Wynk Music app, according to sources.

The company will absorb all Wynk Music employees."Airtel users will have access to Apple Music. Additionally, Wynk Premium users will receive exclusive offers from Airtel for Apple," the spokesperson said. *—PTI*

Apple's next CFO is Indian-origin Kevan

CUPERTINO, 27 AUG

Apple announced that Kevan Parekh, its Vice President of Financial Planning and Analysis, will become Chief Financial Officer and join the executive team, starting 1 January, 2025.

The leadership change comes ahead of Apple's multiple product launch this fall season, which analysts have called the biggest software upgrade for the iPhone. He joined Apple in 2013 and served as Vice President of Financial Planning and Analysis, overseeing critical areas, and led finance for Worldwide Sales, Retail, and Marketing at the company. Before joining Apple, he worked at Thomson Reuters and General Motors, holding various senior leadership positions, including Vice President of Finance, Corporate Treasurer. *—ANI*

Kevan Parekh **PHOTO: X**

Bharat Biotech launches oral cholera vaccine

HYDERABAD, 27 AUG

Bharat Biotech International Ltd on Tuesday announced the launch of Hillchol, a novel single-strain oral cholera vaccine.

A press release from the vaccine maker said Hillchol (BBV131) was developed by Bharat Biotech under licence from Hilleman Laboratories (funded by Merck USA and Wellcome Trust) to combat Cholera.

Global demand for Oral Cholera Vaccines (OCVs) exceeds 100 million doses annually, making them crucial for cholera control. Globally, there is a shortage of OCVs as there is only one manufacturer.

BBIL has established large-scale manufacturing facilities in Hyderabad and Bhubaneswar with a capacity to produce up to 200 million doses of Hillchol, it further said. A multi-stage, clinical evolution process, culminating in phase 3 study confirmed the vaccine safety, immunogenicity and non-inferiority to existing OCVs, establishing its potential for white spirit, public health use. *—PTI*

40% use UPI daily in Tier 3-6 cities: Report

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

More than 40 per cent of consumers in Tier 3 to 6 cities use digital payment on a daily basis, while 45 per cent claimed to use it once in two days, a new survey report said.

"This reflects the frequent usage of digital payments by consumers, even in Tier 3 to 6 locations of the country," said a report by Chase India on The State of Digital Payments in India.

The report identifies the key challenges faced by merchants and consumers in the adoption of digital payment services at the grassroots level. According to the report, nearly half of the merchants who are not using digital payments in rural India are unaware of the service. In contrast, a staggering 94 per cent of consumers who are not using digital payments are aware of it but still don't use it, as they face issues like lack of internet connectivity, limited knowledge, mistrust in online payments and service-related problems. The report added that around 74 per cent of consumers claimed to be using digital payment services for a transaction a family member made. *—PTI*

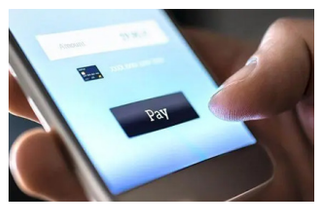


PHOTO: PTI

GETS MUSK'S NOD

In a 1st, California's bill to regulate AI

SACRAMENTO, 27 AUG

Elon Musk on Monday voiced his support for one of the most polarizing artificial intelligence policy proposals in the nation, backing a California bill that would require large-scale models to undergo safety testing.

Senate Bill 1047 has been lambasted by tech giants like Marc Andreesen and OpenAI for what they say are vague and burdensome regulations that would have a chilling effect on open-sourced models. Its author, Democratic state Sen. Scott Wiener, says he's trying to prevent catastrophic harm to humanity, such as bad actors using AI to develop biological weapons.

Musk, in a post on X, said the decision to support the bill was a "tough call and will probably make some people upset," but that he thinks it should pass. His endorsement comes at a critical inflection point for the proposal, which must pass the Legislature by the end of the week to get to Gov. Gavin Newsom's desk.

The AI safety bill would put more responsibility on any developer spending more than US dollar 100 million to build an AI model.

The requirements include: Safety Testing, where companies would need to thoroughly test their AI models to ensure they are safe. Developers would need to put in place safeguards to prevent their AI from causing harm. If an AI model causes severe harm, like mass casualties or damages exceeding $500 million, the state attorney general can take action against the developer.

Independent audits would be required to verify the safety and compliance of AI models and an AI systems must have a built-in kill switch to shut them down instantly if necessary. *—Courtesy, Politico*

Senate Bill 1047 has been lambasted by tech giants like Marc Andreesen and OpenAI **PHOTO: PTI**

Maruti faces land issue over Gujarat 10 lakh unit plant

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

PHOTO: PTI

Maruti Suzuki India is facing "a small delay" in finalising the site to set up a new plant with an annual capacity of 10 lakh units although the upcoming plant at Kharkhoda in Haryana is on track to start production by 2025-26, company Chairman RC Bhargava said on Tuesday.

Addressing shareholders at the company's annual general meeting, Bhargava also reiterated Maruti Suzuki's belief that low cost and small cars are necessary in India's economic and social conditions and a temporary setback in demand is not going to change its strategy, while hoping that small car demand will revive in the next two years.

In January this year at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, Suzuki Motor Corporation President Toshihiro Suzuki had announced that the company's Indian arm Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) will invest Rs 35,000 crore to set up its second manufacturing facility in Gujarat. In 2022, the company had announced setting up of a new plant at Kharkhoda with an installed capacity of 10 lakh units per annum at an investment of Rs 18,000 crore. *—PTI*

Maharaja Trophy: B'luru blaster beat Gulbarga

BENGALURU, 27 AUG

Bengaluru Blasters emerged victorious by two runs against the Gulbarga Mystics in a dramatic encounter at the Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20, at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. Despite the Gulbarga Mystics being firmly entrenched in the driver's seat halfway through the chase, Bengaluru Blasters on Monday managed to defend their total of 153/9, with economical spells from their bowlers in key phases. Earlier in the day, Suraj Ahuja (35) and Naveen MG (29) made vital contributions to power Bengaluru's recovery from 51/6. The Gulbarga Mystics run chase saw a guarded start from Luvnith Sisodia (56 with 45 balls, with six fours and a six) and Devdutt Padikkal (40). Though they peppered the boundary at regular intervals, the Mystics finished the powerplay behind the required run rate at 36/0. *—ANI*

Semwal, Nirupma clinch titles in Squash C'ship

MUMBAI, 27 AUG

Om Semwal and Nirupma Dubey clinched the men's and women's open titles respectively in the second edition of the Garware Club House All India SRFI Squash Championship here. In the men's open final, Mumbai's Semwal defeated his Sri Lankan opponent and No 2 seeded Shamil Wakeel 3-2 to clinch the Sharad Pawar Trophy, winning 11-4, 4-11, 6-11, 13-11, 11-4. In the women's final, Nirupma trumped compatriot Tanishka Jain 3-1 as she won 11-6, 12-10, 3-11, 11-9 in the final of the tournament held here from August 19 to 25. The event, held under the aegis of the Squash Racquets Federation of India (SRFI), witnessed more than 470 entries with 70 per cent children from over 20 states in the country. It had prize money of USD 1000 each for the men's open and women's open categories. *—PTI*

Duleep Trophy: Siraj ruled out, Jadeja to take rest

MUMBAI, 27 AUGUST

The Men's Selection Committee of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Tuesday announced replacements for pacers Mohammed Siraj and Umran Malik, who will miss the first round of Duleep Trophy due to illness. Also, the star all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has been released from the Team B squad. The Duleep Trophy, which marks the beginning of red-ball cricket in the domestic season, will feature top India stars from the international circuit and emerging talents competing at the highest level. The tournament is set to begin on September 5, 2024, in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh and M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru. Pacers will be replaced by Navdeep Saini and Gaurav Yadav in Team B and C squads respectively. "The Men's Selection Committee announced a couple of replacements in the squads for the first round of the 2024-25 Duleep Trophy. Pacer Navdeep Saini will replace Mohd," said BCCI. *—ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

Eye on 3rd test: Eng replaces Wood with Olly Stone

LONDON, 27 AUG

England has replaced the injured Mark Wood with fellow fast bowler Olly Stone in its team for the second cricket test against Sri Lanka at Lord's starting Thursday. It will be Stone's first test appearance since June 2021. England named its team on Tuesday, with Stone the only change from the team that won the first test by five wickets in Manchester last week. *—AP*

What to expect as 4,400 athletes compete in Paris

Athletes to compete for 549 medals across 22 sports

PARIS, 27 AUG

The Paralympic Games are set to open Wednesday as some 4,400 athletes with disabilities, permanent injuries or impairments prepare to compete for 549 medals across 22 sports over 11 days in Paris.

The French capital, which just hosted the Olympics, again provides the backdrop for what promises to be another spectacle, with many of the same venues hosting Paralympic competitions. Historic square Place de la Concorde, which hosted skateboarding, breaking and 3x3 basketball during the Olympics, will host the opening ceremony.

Equestrian returns to Château de Versailles, which will host para equestrian events. The Grand Palais transitions from fencing to wheelchair fencing. Archery venue Invalides will host para archery.

The venue beside the Eiffel Tower, which hosted beach volleyball during the Olympics, will host blind soccer, an adaption of the game for visually impaired players in teams of five with a ball containing rattles.

Of the 22 Paralympic sports, only two do not have an Olympic equivalent — goalball and boccia. In goalball, teams of visually impaired or blind players take turns rolling a ball containing bells toward the opposing goal while the defending team's players act as goalkeepers. In boccia, players throw or roll leather balls as close as they can to a small ball called a jack.

Compared to the previous edition of the Paralympics in Tokyo, 10 medal events have been added to give female athletes and those with high-support needs more opportunities *PHOTO: X/@PARALYMPICS*

Compared to the previous edition of the Paralympics in Tokyo, 10 medal events have been added to give female athletes and those with high-support needs more opportunities. The Paralympic flame was lit Saturday in Stoke Mandeville, a village northwest of London widely considered the birthplace of the Paralympic Games, and was to make its way via a torch relay under the English Channel to cities all over France before lighting the cauldron during the opening ceremony on Wednesday.

- The Paralympic Games are set to open Wednesday as some 4,400 athletes with disabilities, permanent injuries or impairments prepare to compete for 549 medals across 22 sports over 11 days in Paris

The athletes — Paralympians — will be the focus of attention starting Thursday in the first day of competition, when there will be medals to be won in para taekwondo, para table tennis, para swimming and para cycling on the track.

American multi-sport specialist Oksana Masters won a hand-cycle road race and time trial at the Tokyo Paralympics, and she will be looking to add to her career total of seven gold and 17 medals overall in both summer and winter events.

Para powerlifter Sherif Osman of Egypt is going for his fourth gold medal, and Italian fencer Bebe Vio is vying for her third consecutive gold in wheelchair fencing. After contracting meningitis as a child, doctors amputated both her legs and her forearms to save her life. *—PTI*

US OPEN

Djokovic marches into 2nd round

NEW YORK, 27 AUG

Novak Djokovic began his bid for a record 25th Grand Slam title and tied Roger Federer with his 89th match win at the US Open by defeating qualifier Radu Albot of Moldova 6-2, 6-2, 6-4. The second-seeded Djokovic, again wearing a gray sleeve over his surgically repaired right knee, was competing for the first time since claiming an Olympic gold medal three weeks ago at the Paris Games, the last significant achievement that was missing from his resume.

He said his knee, which was operated on in early June, feels fine. Djokovic, a 37-year-old from Serbia, improved to 18-0 in first-round matches at Flushing Meadows and is now 89-13 overall at the hard-court tournament, which he's won four times, including a year ago. He's never lost earlier than the third round at the U.S. Open; Albot never has been past the third round in 30 appearances at majors.

The retired Federer went 89-14 in New York, with five consecutive championships from 2004 to 2008. He's the most recent man to win the U.S. Open at least twice in a row. Among men, only Jimmy Connors, who went 98-17, won more matches than Djokovic and Federer at the event.

Djokovic never has lost a Grand Slam match to someone ranked as low as No. 138 Albot. And Albot is now 0-12 against opponents ranked in the top 10.

Next up for Djokovic is a countryman, familiar opponent and friend, Laslo Djere, who advanced with a 6-7 (7), 6-1, 6-7 (7), 6-4, 6-2 victory over Jan-Lennard Struff. *—PTI*

Novak Djokovic, of Serbia, serves to Radu Albot, of Moldova, during a first round match of the US Open tennis championships on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Gauff begins title with an easy win

NEW YORK, 27 AUG

The chant rang out in cavernous Arthur Ashe Stadium on Monday at the US Open before Coco Gauff's first service game of her first match of her first Grand Slam tournament as a defending champion: "Here we go, Coco! Here we go!"

Coming to Flushing Meadows off a series of early exits at other events, Gauff already was down 1-0 to Varvara Gracheva, having dropped the match's initial game at love by making four groundstroke errors. What followed was a tough, tight game, featuring 14 points across eight minutes and three break chances for Gracheva.The important part, of course, was that Gauff saved all of those break points, claimed that game, and suddenly was in complete control on the way to a 6-2, 6-0 victory that not only put the 20-year-old American in the second round but also told her — and everyone else — that her game is in better shape than it appeared lately.

Day 1 at the year's last Grand Slam tournament went about as well as possible for Gauff and another young American featured in Ashe, 13th-seeded Ben Shelton, a semifinalist a year ago who beat 2020 champion Dominic Thiem 6-4, 6-2, 6-2. It was the last U.S. Open match for Thiem, who turns 31 next week and is retiring after this season.Seeded women's winners included No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, the two-time Australian Open champion who was the runner-up to Gauff a year ago in New York; No. 7 Zheng Qinwen, the women's gold medalist at the Paris Olympics earlier this month; No. 24 Donna Vekic, the silver medalist; No. 12 Daria Kasatkina; and No. 14 Madison Keys. *—AP*

NAGAL OUSTED FROM US OPEN BY GRIEKSPOOR

NEW YORK, 27 AUG

India's top player Sumit Nagal crashed out of the US Open, the last Grand Slam of the season, after suffering a straight-set defeat against Dutch player Tallon Griekspoor in the opening round here.

Nagal struggled with his first serve, winning only 61 percent of those points to lose 1-6 3-6 6-7(8) to Griekspoor, who won 87 percent of his first serve points, on Monday night. Nagal broke his rival twice while the Dutchman converted six of his 11 break chances in the two hour and 20-minute contest.

The 27-year-old from Jhajjar found his rhythm quite late as he kept spraying unforced errors. Several times the Dutchman found easy winners by catching the Indian wrong footed. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

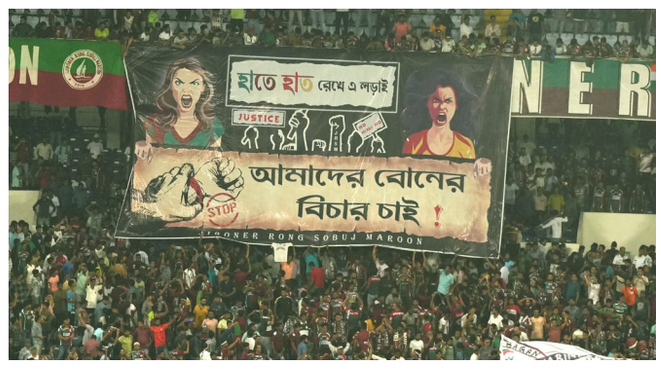
PHOTO: PTI

TAARINI SURI CLINCHES TWO BADMINTON CROWNS

MUMBAI, 27 AUG

Taarni Suri from Mumbai clinched girls' doubles and mixed doubles' titles in the Kotak India Junior U-19 International Badminton tournament, held in Hyderabad. The tournament was held at the Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad.

The 17-year-old Taarini, who trains at the Cricket Club of India under Hufrish Nariman, teamed up with Shravani Walekar to beat the Indonesian combination of Keyla Putri and Micha Wardoyo 21-10, 21-15 in the girls' doubles final. Taarini and Bhavya Chhabra then produced an upset against the top seeded Attawut Sreepeaw and Pannawee Polyiam of Thailand 21-13, 19-21, 21-14 in the mixed doubles final. Chhabra trains at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati, Assam, and has also kept her focus on doubles. *—PTI*



Mohun Bagan Super Giants players celebrate after winning the 2nd semifinal match of Durand Cup against Bengaluru FC, at VYBK Stadium in Kolkata on Tuesday; Mohun Bagan Super Giants supporters hold a banner that reads in Bengali 'amader boner bichar chai' (We want justice for our sister) in protest demanding justice in the murder and rape of a postgraduate trainee doctor during the match *PHOTOS: X/@MOHUNBAGANSG/PTI*

Bagan come back to pip Bengaluru FC, book spot in final

KOLKATA, 27 AUG

Vishal Kaith's twin saves in the tiebreaker helped defending champions Mohun Bagan make a splendid comeback from two goals down to edge star-studded Bengaluru FC 4-3 (2-2 after full-time) to reach the Durand Cup final for a record 30th time here on Tuesday.

After an intense shooting in the tiebreaker where both teams were locked three-all, a composed Kaith, who had also stood tall under the bar in their tie-breaker win over Punjab FC in the quarters last week, thwarted the strikes of Halicharan Narzary and Aleksandar Jovaovic to seal the match.

The record 17-time champions Mohun Bagan will face NorthEast United FC in the summit clash here on Saturday.

Jason Cummings, Manvir Singh, Liston Colaco and Dimitri Petratos, who stood-in as skipper after Subahsish Bose's 30th minute injury, struck the other four goals in the tie-breaker.

Bengaluru FC's three strikes came from Edgar Mendez, Rahul Bheke and Pedro Capo. Bengaluru earlier went ahead through goals by legendary Sunil Chhetri (42nd) and youngster Vinith Venkatesh (50th).

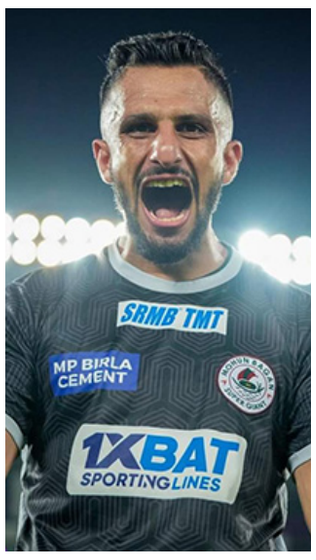
Bagan made spirited comeback through Dimitri Petratos (68th), and Anirudh Thapa (84th). On a day when Howrah and the western part of the metropolis turned into a 'war zone' due to clashes between police and protesters over the rape and murder case at the

The talismanic Chhetri made his first start of the ongoing Durand Cup as Bengaluru made two changes, while Bagan made six changes with Sahal Abdul Samad leading the attack, supported by Petratos and Cummings.

Mohun Bagan also received a setback when their captain and defensive mainstay Subhasish had to be substituted with an injury. Bengaluru tried to make an early dent and were awarded a penalty in the 41st minute after the promising Vinith was brought down by Colaco as Chhetri added another goal to his tally with his consummate strike from the spot.

It woke up Bagan from the slumber as they made a flurry of attacks with the clock nearing halftime.

There were a couple of chances within a minute. First it was Colaco's shot that came off the bar and then Alberto Noguera's towering header hitting the woodwork. *—PTI*



Vishal Kaith celebrates after saving two penalties against Bengaluru FC *PHOTO: X/@MOHUNBAGANSG*

IN LIMA

India fields 43 athletes at U20 Athletics C'ships

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

A 43-member Indian contingent will be in action during the World Athletics U20 Championships taking place in Peru from 28 to 31 August.

A total of 23 athletes will be taking part in men's events while 20 will be playing in women's competitions. India will also be competing in the 4 x 400 m mixed relay race, as per Olympics.com.

Dipanshu Sharma, the current Asian U20 champion in men's javelin throw, will be a key player for India. India secured a total of seven medals at the Asian Championships held in Dubai this year back in April.

The Indian quartet of Jay Kumar, Neeru Pahtak, Rihan Chaudhary and Sandramol Sabu qualified for the 4x400m mixed relay final after finishing overall third among 20 competing teams at the World Athletics U20 Championships.

Anurag Singh Kaler (shot put), Ranvir Singh (3000m steeplechase), Harshit Kumar (hammer throw), Pavana Nagaraj (long jump), Ekta Dey (3000m steeplechase) and the women's 4x400m relay team also secured gold medals at the Asian Championships and will now be playing in track and field events at Peru as well.

Bapi Hansda, will be participating in the 4x400m relay and the 400m events after recovering from dengue, which caused him to miss the Asian U20 Athletics Championships in April.

At Cali U20 World Athletics Championships 2022, India secured two silver medals (Selva Thirumaran in triple jump and mixed 4x400m relay) and one bronze medal (Rupal Chaudhary in 400m).

The USA finished at the top of the medal tally back in the 2022 World Championships with 15 medals - seven gold, four silver and four bronze. Many Indian athletes have played in this championships in their athletics journey over the years.

Notably, the Olympic gold medalist and current world champion in javelin throw, was the first-ever Indian to secure the U20 title. Back in 2016, Neeraj registered a junior javelin record of 86.48m to get the gold medal. *—ANI/PTI*

Harmanpreet Kaur *PHOTO: PTI*

HARMANPREET TO LEAD INDIA AT WOMEN'S T20 WC

NEW DELHI, 27 AUG

India on Tuesday named a tried and tested squad for the Women's T20 World Cup under the leadership of Harmanpreet Kaur, hoping the experienced bunch takes the team to an elusive ICC trophy.

Barring Uma Chetry, all the squad members who were part of an unsuccessful Asia Cup campaign in July have been retained for the marquee event beginning in the UAE from October 3. The competition was shifted to the UAE from Bangladesh following unrest in the South Asian nation owing to a students' protest.

Spin all-rounder Shreyanka Patil and top-order batter Yastika Bhatia have been included in the squad subject to fitness. *—PTI*